

LETTERS

FROM

EDINBURGH;

Written in the Years 1774 and 1775:

CONTAINING

SOME OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

Diversions, Customs, Manners, *and* Laws,

OF THE

SCOTCH NATION,

DURING A SIX MONTHS RESIDENCE IN
EDINBURGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

Non hic centauros, non gorgona, harpyasque
Invenies, Hominem pagina nostra sapit.

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J. EXSHAW, and J. BEATTY.

L E T T E R S

FROM

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Written in the Years 1754 and 1755;

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ON THE

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OF THE

SCOTCH NATION

DURING A SIX MONTHS RESIDENCE IN

EDINBURGH

IN TWO VOLUMES

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LETTER XXV.

On the College of Edinburgh, &c.

To Dr. M. at Oxford.

Edinburgh, March 13, 1775.

I Received your obliging and polite letter from the University; and am very happy to find, that our friend M. D— has had the success which I am sensible he merited, both as a scholar and a gentleman. Happy would the world be if every man, who had as much learning, was equally fortunate; and I think I may say, happy would it be for the University of Oxford, if the instruction of the rising generation was ever committed to the care of those, who are as worthy of setting them an example of civility and good manners, as of morality and virtue. I must own that, in this respect, the Professors of the College of Edinburgh shine conspicuous: and though all of them

are men of letters, and skilled in the sciences they profess, they are not less acquainted with the world, and with polite behaviour, than with polite literature.

The College is a very ancient and irregular building, consisting of three courts on different planes, which are small, and contain rooms for the Professors to read their lectures. I do not find any of the Professors inhabit the College, except the Principal, who lives in a house which stands where formerly was situated the house of the Provost of the Kirk of Field, blown up by gunpowder A. D. 1567, to conceal the murder of Henry husband to Queen Mary.

As being the foundation of the Citizens, the College is in the patronage of the Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh; who as Curators, have the management of its revenues. Oliver Cromwel, A. D. 1658, gave towards its support an Annuity of two hundred pounds sterling; and the whole annual expences of it amount to 2000l. The poor Students, who resemble the Scholars in our Universities, are fifty-one in number; they have different sums allowed them, and
five

five of them have ten pounds a year : they wear no gowns, and have no marks of distinction, as at Glasgow and St. Andrews.

The Library is well furnished with books in variety of languages and sciences. There is a picture in it of Lord Napier of Marcheston, the celebrated inventor of the logarithms and a very curious copy of a double-faced letter, written by Cardinal Richelieu to the Embassador of France at Rome, concerning a Benedictine Monk, which implies either the best or the most villainous character.

In this, as in all the other Colleges of Scotland, till of late, were only taught Divinity, School-philosophy, Mathematics, and Languages: but in the last reigns, the number of Professors was so augmented, that nothing is wanting to form a complete academical education ; since all the liberal arts are taught as in the other celebrated universities in Europe. Divinity, Church History, Civil Law, the Law of Nature and Nations, and Scotch Law, Anatomy, Theory of Physic, Practice of Physic, Chymistry, Botany, Mathematics, Universal History, Natural Philosophy,
B 2 Logic,

Logic, Metaphysics, and Ethics, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew languages, have each their respective Professor; and as the sciences of Divinity and Mathematics, and the Greek tongue have two Professors, the number of the whole amounts to twenty-one, and the sciences taught by them eighteen. Their salaries are different; the largest is that of the Professor of the Law of Nature and Nations, being one hundred and fifty pounds, and the lowest is thirty-three pounds sterling: but the number of students that frequent the College amply recompense them for the trouble and expence of lectures.

As the University of Edinburgh is celebrated throughout Europe for its instruction in particular branches of philosophy and literature, the number of young persons that crowd here from different countries is prodigious, and the profit arising from them is sensibly perceived through all Scotland, as they contribute to the support of many thousands of its inhabitants, in supplying either their necessities or luxury by their manufactures and industry. They are under no restraint from the College, but have lodgings in the City. In general they are very

ry extravagant, especially those from Ireland, who too often forsake the calm, retired paths of learning and science, to revel in the public scenes of dissipation and debauchery. But the students who are natives of this country, present a different picture. The miserable holes which some of them inhabit, their abstemiousness and parsimony, their constant attendance to study, their indefatigable industry, even border on romance. They seem to look on learning as a diversion, and when they have once roused her from her abstruse and concealed haunts, never quit her footsteps, till they have pursued her to the covert. But, in general, they apply themselves to too many of the Professors, to pay a proper attention to each; and their excessive earnestness to obtain an universal knowledge, hinders them from gaining that proficiency in any one science, which ought to be the object of great minds. I take this to be one reason of that mediocrity of learning which Dr. Johnson speaks of in his Tour, and which is to be found in every part of Scotland. For, as the lectures of the Professors are open to every one, and the expence of attending them very trifling, it is in the power of almost every trades-

man to furnish his son with that instruction which is most adapted to his taste or capacity, and is the reason why the middle degree of people are not in such a state of ignorance as in England and in other countries. On the contrary, the easy access to the lectures is an inducement to those whose fortune and circumstances can support the expence, to attend so many, that the knowledge which they acquire must be imperfect and superficial.

The College of Edinburgh does not differ more from the Universities of England in any respect than in this; that every age and every rank have a liberty of choosing such lectures as are most suited to their inclination, pleasures, or pursuits in life; whereas, at Oxford and Cambridge, a young man is no sooner enlisted under the banners of *alma mater*, but he is compelled to listen to sciences for which he has no taste, neglects those studies to which his genius points, and by the time he arrives at that age when serious thoughts and calm reflection should disclose the pleasures of reason and philosophy, he is obliged to behold them
with

with contempt and disdain, because he finds them the objects of striplings and schoolboys.

I remain yours sincerely,

LETTER XXVI.

On the Lectures of the College ; Mode of reading them ; and Observations on some of the Professors of the College.

To the Reverend Dr. M——, at Oxford.

Edinburgh, March 15, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

AS I am not one of those persons who affect to stand on punctilio at any time ; it would be unpardonable in me to wait the arrival of an answer to my last letter ; when I am sufficiently conscious your time is never employed to so little purpose as in writing to me ; and my own never so well, as in testifying my gratitude for the innumerable obligations I lie under to your friendship.

Since

Since my last, I may almost say I am again commenced Academician: I have attended some of the Professors Lectures, and find in them so much entertainment, that I propose, for the future, spending some hours with them every day. But I cannot say that they are the most agreeable companions; the Scotch students not being so remarkable for their cleanliness and politeness as for their poverty, famine, and science.

I believe, I before omitted giving you any information concerning the mode of reading lectures: I must just tell you, therefore, that each Professor has his room or theatre; which is surrounded by benches, that have desks before them for the students to write and take notes; and the Professor stands, or is seated, in the middle, as is best adapted to the purport of his lecture. Most of the Professors wear gowns like those of our Universities; and their lecture, in general, lasts about three quarters of an hour.

As the College of Edinburgh has for many years been celebrated throughout Europe for its instruction in Physic, and the sciences which belong to it; you can-

not but imagine that the greatest care is taken in the appointment of persons to the chair of those professorships which relate to this branch of knowledge; and indeed the electors gain great credit in the choice of all, there not being one who is not remarkable for his learning and abilities. The theory of Physic, Chemistry, and Anatomy, have Dr. Cullen, Dr. Black, and Dr. Munro: who are not more conspicuous for their skill in their profession, than for their knowledge of Philosophy and Mankind. But as the merit of these learned men must be as well known to you as to the rest of the world, who are at all acquainted with the sphere of literature; it would be needless for me to add my poor pittance of praise to characters which bear the stamp of general approbation. I shall only speak of them, therefore, as persons appointed to convey to the minds of youth that part of science which they profess, and of their manner of reading their lectures. In this last particular, I wish I could say as much in commendation of Dr. Cullen, as of many others; a dryness and insipidity in his delivery, with a want of energy in his manner, too often renders his lectures, which have every other merit,

rit, dull and uninteresting : but at the same time it must be acknowledged that his wonderful penetration and sagacity, his clearness and perspicuity, his profound knowledge of the mysteries of his profession, make him the most qualified to instruct, and amply recompense any other deficiency.

The Professor of Chemistry is too diffident of the justness of his expression ever to appear an Orator: he is so concise in his sentences, and at the same time abounds in such a profusion of ideas, that it is with the greatest difficulty he can find words satisfactory to himself: which might make many people imagine that he is ignorant of language. Indeed, sometimes he is at such a loss to explain his meaning, that he is obliged to make a long pause in his lecture; but when once his expression breaks forth, its propriety and strength more than reward your expectation: and no Chemist was ever more successful in his experiments than Dr. Black.

The Professor of Anatomy is the most frequented of any of the Professors; as it is necessary for all the votaries of Esculapius

culapius to have a competent knowledge of this, as the foundation and groundwork of the other parts of Physic. Dr. Monro has all the advantages of a great Orator, full of strength and force in his expression, round and manly in his periods, emphatical and bold in his manner of delivery: he particularly avoids that familiarity, which too many of the Professors are apt to fall into in their lectures, and which seems to degrade their dignity by giving them the air of common conversation: and from this reason he appears to many to excel more in the physiological than in any other part of Anatomy; for the proper explanation of which an inferior manner might be better accommodated.

But before I quit this subject, I must not forget the Professor of Rhetoric; who, of all others, though perhaps not the most attended, claims the regard and observation of the polite scholar. The harmony of his diction, the elegance and sagacity of his criticisms, the proper modulation of his voice, the spirit and fire of his imagination, all conspire to make him that Orator which he wishes to make his pupils. I need say nothing further in commendation

commendation of Dr. Blair, than that all his lectures are composed in the same graceful style, the same sweetness of language, the same vivacity of thought and nervous manliness, which is to be found in his "Essay on "the Poems of Ossian," and which does not do him more credit as a scholar, than as a man.

I have mentioned these Professors to you, as in general they are more known in the learned world than many of the others; but indeed most of them are equally great and meritorious in their respective offices: and I really believe, there is no part of the world where so general an education can be obtained as in Edinburgh. I must say (and I flatter myself you will pardon my impartiality) it is my opinion, were our Universities on this plan as to instruction, and, instead of that distinction of Tutors in different Colleges, a set of the most eminent Scholars were appointed to read lectures indiscriminately to the whole, it would be a considerable step towards the advancement of learning and literature.

The College of Edinburgh confers degrees as the Universities of England and
Scotland

Scotland do: but no degree under a Doctor is of any estimation; which may be had as soon as the necessary instruction can be acquired, to pass the proper examination.

Believe me yours sincerely.

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

*On Edinburgh as a place of polite Education;
with some Observations on their Trade, and
Abilities for it.*

To the Reverend Dr. M——, at Oxford.

Edinburgh, March 25, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

IN a former letter to you I have considered Edinburgh as a seat of learning, and peculiar for its instruction in the science of Physic: but I can assure you, that the Graces also deign to visit this northern climate; and by their frequent abode here, I should imagine, do not find it too cold for their constitution.

There are few places where a polite education can be better acquired than in this City; and where the knowledge requisite to form a Gentleman, and a Man of the World, can be sooner obtained. It
is

is one of the greatest faults in our Universities, that so much attention and importance should be given to studies, which, perhaps, are of little use to a man in life, when either his fortune or dignity calls on him to exert his knowledge for the happiness of his fellow-countrymen; and, on the contrary, that those qualifications which make a man an amiable Friend, and an agreeable Companion, should be held in contempt, or perfectly neglected. But here it is quite otherwise. Each attends that system of Lectures which suit either his genius or intended pursuits, without restraint or compulsion. No particular study or science is in higher estimation than another: all are taught; each has its votaries; and a proper portion of time is allotted to those inferior qualifications, which we every day see assist the greater accomplishments in the acquisition of reputation and fortune. Hence it arises, that the Scotch in general have rather that kind of useful acquaintance with literature, which is so recommended in the *Cortegiano*, as procuring a man friends and esteem; than any great and deep knowledge in one particular art or language. And hence it is, that we find
them

them excelling the English as Courtiers, and Men of the World; because they are always well stored with such acquisitions as render them more serviceable in society; and from which the most common occasions of life may reap some advantage.

Besides the modern Languages, Music, Painting, Fencing, Riding, and Dancing, are all taught here in some degree of perfection: and manly exercises are admired and encouraged. I remember the celebrated Author whom I before mentioned, makes a skill in wrestling and throwing the coits, and in such other low amusements, absolutely necessary to complete the character of his accomplished Gentleman. On this account, because his grand design being to make himself agreeable, and to be "all things to all men," the method to accomplish this design, was to obtain a knowledge, not only in those things which were useful and profitable, but likewise in those lesser accomplishments which have acquired a reputation from the caprice or genius of different ranks of mankind.

The Royal Academy for Fencing and
Riding

Riding is always supplied with one of the best masters; who at present is one Angelo Tremmermondo, an Italian; and, one would conjecture from his name, from the confines of Mount Vesuvius. The Riding-house is a large and spacious building, admirably adapted to the purpose, and of great benefit to the students; who, in the shortest time possible, have the advantage of taking these wholesome exercises. It is particularly necessary in this City, as the riding on the roads about Edinburgh is exceedingly disagreeable and inconvenient: as they are all paved like the *Pavée* in France, and no part left for the horses on each side. The inhabitants of the City are obliged to drive or ride on the sands at Leith, or Mussleborough; which are at least three miles distant, and too far for the young candidate for literary fame constantly to frequent; as it would exhaust too much of his time from recreations of more important consequence.

As I am on the subject of Riding, I must just make one observation, that the Scotch are exceedingly ignorant of horses, and the care and management of them. They

They have no idea of any thing beyond a Galloway or a strong, slow cart-horse; and what they look on as hunters, are little better. The thorough-bred, finewy racer, which is now so common in England, is here a phænomenon. They have no genius or taste for riding, nor is it at all encouraged, except in the *Manege*. It is true, indeed, their country is but ill suited to hunting; which is the reason that it is not worth while breeding that species of horse; and since their principal races are on the sands, on which four miles are equivalent to five on the turf, speed must always yield the victory to strength.

The Scotch are more fond of fencing than riding, and in general excel in it. But their greatest talent seems to be in acquiring the knowledge of, and speaking foreign languages; which they do with much greater facility than our countrymen. They read also the Latin after the manner of the French, and other nations on the Continent; in which they find much advantage in travelling, as they can be always understood, if they are at a loss to explain themselves in the language of the country.

There

There are few of the middle rank of men in this nation but what are in some degree acquainted with the Latin tongue, as it is taught in almost all the common schools; and I believe there are several branches of business that find the advantage of it, though trade in general does not seem to flourish amongst them; and I fear it will still decrease, if the custom of emigrating to America continues so much in fashion. I find even now, that Scotland runs every year somewhat in debt, by importing so much beyond its exportation; which being to be drawn out in coin, will be a certain, slow consumption of the treasure of the kingdom, unless remedied by sumptuary laws, or examples for lessening the importation of foreign commodities, or else by industry for increasing the native, which are either consumed at home, or carried abroad. Two of the greatest sources of wealth to this people, is the fishing trade, and the linen; which they ought to promote by every exertion in their power; the one to keep their money at home, the other to bring in more from abroad.

But on the whole, I do not think the
natives

natives of this country calculated for trade, not from their education, but from their natural dispositions and abilities. They want that dull and persevering genius, that aversion to nobler pursuits, which is the characteristic of the Dutch nation. They have a certain ambition implanted in their nature to know more, and appear greater in the eye of the world, than is expected from them; and have (I must call it) such a ridiculous respect to family and ancestry, that one may say with propriety, they prefer a man of quality in poverty and rags, to the richest man upon Change in a coach and six. No wonder then that the idea of a tradesman should be disgustful and disagreeable, when almost every one fancies himself above it, because a century ago there was a peerage in his family.

Believe me your most obedient friend,

and humble servant.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

*On their Gardening, and Improvements in
Planting, &c.*

To William M—— Esq.

Edinburgh, March 29, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

AMONGST the number of improvements which have been encouraged in Great Britain within a few years, there is one which seems to have made as great a progress in this country as in England; I mean, the Improvement of taste in Gardening, Parks, Plantations, and Pleasure Grounds, which is now directly opposite to what it was in the times of our fathers and grandfathers. I cannot look back but with astonishment, to find that it ever entered into the mind of man to imagine, that trees clipt into the resemblance of pillars

pillars and animals were beautiful or ornamental; and that the stiff formality of a gravel-walk terras, parterres divided into twenty regular figures, with a Cupid or a Mercury at each corner, and a mixture of fountains, grotto's, summer-houses and stone-steps, in the space, perhaps, of two acres, should be pleasing or agreeable. And yet we find so great a genius as Sir William Temple, not only praising this disposition for a garden, as the most entertaining and delightful, but handing it down to posterity as the compleatest model.

There is no doubt but that the inhabitants of Scotland lie under many disadvantages with respect to climate; and the prodigious north-east winds, which sweep every thing before them near Edinburgh, render it impossible to have fruit in that perfection, as in parts more to the south: but yet their knowledge in Gardening is by no means inferior to their neighbours; and art and fire in some measure make up for natural deficiencies, and the inclemency of their seasons. As to common kitchen-garden vegetables, I know of no place where they are to be had in greater plenty or perfection than here:

here: The soil seems peculiarly favourable to them, and the whole country round Edinburgh is employed for that purpose. The great abundance of potatoes and carrots, which are excellent of their kind, makes it extremely comfortable to the poorer sort of people, who often can get nothing else to support their families during winter. There are also some places a little distant from the City, which by being in a valley have nothing to counteract the genial warmth of the sun, that have such a profusion of strawberries, that I hardly think Switzerland produces them in greater quantities. I am informed likewise, that gooseberries are equally plentiful, and arrive at the same perfection. There are few cherries, except on walls, that have any flavour. Apricots, peaches, and nectarines, are but of an inferior quality. Figs and mulberries are not to be met with; and few sorts of vines will bear any thing. Though there is but one orchard near Edinburgh, and hardly another in the whole country, I cannot say that common pears and apples are so scarce as you would imagine; but good apples are not to be seen.

The little variety of fruit which this
climate

climate brings to perfection, is the cause that the inhabitants set any thing on their tables, after dinner, that has the appearance of it ; and I have often observed, at the house of principal people, a plate of small turnips, which they call " Neeps," introduced in the dessert, and eat with as much avidity as if they had been fruit of the first perfection. But if the Scotch are deprived, by the nature of their situation, of the enjoyment of natural fruit, they have the best opportunity of furnishing themselves with hot-houses, as well from the cheapness, as from the excellence of their coals ; and in this respect, have the advantage of the rest of Great Britain. There are few gentlemen of any consequence that are not supplied with fruit by this means ; and indeed, melons, pines, grapes, and many other sorts, are produced here with great success.

The Botanical or Physic Garden belonging to the College, is perhaps one of the best in Europe. It is large and spacious, and placed in a warm retired situation, between Leith and Edinburgh ; where it is little exposed to the fury of the blasts. There are many of the most

C

curious

curious exotic plants ; and a neat and elegant apartment is provided for the professor, who reads a course of lectures constantly every year, for the benefit of the students in medicine.

The gentlemen who have seats near Edinburgh, which, from the romantic and diversified nature of the country, are generally picturesque and beautiful, deserve the highest commendation, as well for their taste and judgment in Planting, as for their encouragement in that useful and ornamental diversion. The rebellious spirit, and unhappy disturbances, which so long distracted this nation, and often brought ruin and desolation into the very heart of the kingdom, prevented, in former times, that attention to rural pleasures, and beautifying the face of their country, which our ancestors so much delighted in, and of which we every day enjoy the advantage and profit.

Except in the parks of some particular noblemen, there are few oaks that have seen half a century ; which Dr. Johnson, with his usual candor and good-nature, seems to speak of as an opprobrium ; as if it was matter of censure to
to

to the present generation, that their forefathers neglected to plant them. It would have been much more worthy the pen of so *patriotic* a Writer, to have told the world, how much posterity will be indebted to modern times for future forests and natives : how an almost barren and uncultivated tract of country will, in a few years, exhibit a new creation, which will equally contribute to pleasure and to wealth, through the industry and elegance of the present inheritors.

The soil of most parts of the Lowlands of Scotland is capable of bearing any sort of timber that is common in the woods in England ; and if acorns, ashen-keys, and beech-mast, are sown amongst the different sorts of firs, their growth, and the shoots which they make are incredible, and surpassing expectation. But there is one thing which I wish was more universal, and more practised in this country, especially near the City of Edinburgh ; I mean inclosures of a moderate size, round which, instead of walls of stone, they might raise trees and hedges, that in a short time would amply pay them, and reward their trouble by innumerable advantages. At first

there would be no necessity for any thing but what is natural to the climate, than which nothing can be more ornamental, in producing a constant spring from their perpetual verdure: and though it cannot be said that their appearance is comparable to the green and vernal hue of those which shoot out annually, yet surely we cannot but admire the Providence of the Deity, who, in recompence for the more lively plants, which require a greater degree of warmth and sun-shine, has bestowed on the natives of the North an unvaried and unchangeable beauty.

“ For my own part, I am peculiarly
“ fond of the whole species of Ever-
“ greens, and often find great pleasure
“ amongst them in the most uncomfor-
“ table seasons of the year. There is
“ something unspeakably chearful in a
“ spot of ground that is covered with
“ trees, which smile amidst all the rigors
“ of winter, and which give a view
“ of the most gay season, in the
“ midst of that which is most dead
“ and melancholy.” For this reason, I
wish also to recommend to the Scotch to
cultivate the Horn-beam and the Holly,
which are highly picturesque and of great
utility

utility to fences. I need not tell you what a delightful alteration this would make in the prospect of a country, which, in many parts, is wide and extended, without the appearance of vegetation higher above its surface than a blade of corn; where the only object to intercept the view or diversify the scene, is, perhaps, a sheepfold, or the gloomy entrance of a coal-mine; or where the eye wanders at large with but one idea, till interrupted by the head of some vast and naked mountain.

But from Plantations and Inclosures in those parts of Scotland which would admit of them, (and almost all the arable part certainly would,) other advantages would be derived independantly of their worth, and the pleasure which they would produce: from the increase of vegetation in purifying the air, and dispelling those putrid and noxious vapours, which are frequently wafted here from the Highlands, to the detriment of animal health; and from the shelter and warmth which they would furnish from the winds, which now traverse the country uncontrolled, without any thing to oppose their passage, and too often

"Tear up the sands, and sweep whole plains
away."

But as I must have exhausted your
patience, I will conclude with subscrib-
ing myself

Your's sincerely.

LETTER

LETTER XXIX.

*The Superstition of the Scotch; the Effects
of it in general.*

To R. D. Esq;

Edinburgh, April 1, 1775.

SIR,

ONE would imagine, from observing the manners of this Country, that the people considered going to church as one of the most essential points of Religion. Pass thro' Edinburgh during the time of service, and you will not meet with a human creature: the streets are silent and solitary; and you would conclude, from the appearance of them, that some epidemical disorder had depopulated the whole City. But the moment prayers are over, the scene changes: they pour from the churches in multitudes, which nothing but having seen can give you an idea of. Even with every

care possible you are driven from one side to another, till your shoulders are almost dislocated; for they are so intently employed with meditating on the good things they have heard, and the enjoyments of another life, that they have no time to look before them. They proceed in one uniform pace, wite their large prayer-books under their arms, their eyes fixed steadily on the ground, and wrapped up in their plaid cloaks, regardless of every thing that passes. After having remained some time at home, they again fall out to church, where they continue till five o'clock in the evening. At this hour all public devotions are over for this day; and they then begin their little schemes of entertainment. The young Girls, who have been melting in devotion for the space of six or seven hours, take walks in the meadows and other places with their Lovers, in order to amuse themselves: and, what you will probably think very strange, it often happens that their heavenly temper of mind produces effects which are quite the reverse. The older people, whose religion is less enthusiastic, retire to little innocent parties, where the scandal of the town, and the faults of their
their

their neighbours, are very piously discussed.

The influence of Superstition is ridiculously strong in this country. The Clergy are expected to go to no public place whatever: a Play, in particular, however innocent or sentimental, is esteemed highly immoral for a Minister; and were he once to be seen at an Assembly, he might as well resign his profession; for no one would listen to him afterwards. Deprived of all enjoyment abroad, many of them seek it at home in a bottle; for they know that "wine maketh man of a chearful countenance." Were it not for this consolation (of which many of them drink very deep) they would really pass the most unfociable life that can be imagined. Watched and observed every where, all the common indulgences of living denied to them, liable to be deprived of their office for the slightest offences, they are only rewarded for all this mortification by an income of one hundred pounds a year, and many of them by a much smaller sum.

During the Lent season they have a particular week, which is called, very properly,

properly, *the preaching week*; for they really do nothing but pray. This week is distinguished by every method of solemnity; and every person is expected to attend church constantly. The Sacrament is administered at this time; and it is thought highly indecent not to receive it. All the people of fashion wait for this week before they retire into the country: for in some measure it answers the purpose of confession; and they are enabled to pass the remaining part of the year with cheerfulness and ease. All is conducted in a very regular way. The Clergy rail at the people for the ungodliness of the past winter: the people repent, and are forgiven, till the next year obliges them to ask a fresh pardon for fresh offences.

I think I need scarcely observe to you, that in spite of this outward shew, and the force of superstition, that the Scotch, as a nation, are far from being religious: Deism is the ruling principle. Shocked with the gross absurdities with which their religion is loaded, they pay an obedience to it externally, but treat it with very little ceremony in private. In some measure this is the natural consequence.

sequence. The mind, revolting at the folly and inconsistencies with which priests in the anxiety of their zeal perplex the system, too frequently runs into the other extreme ; and, convinced of the improbability of many points of faith, becomes an infidel in all.

It is a maxim, which is but true, that the corruption of the best things terminates in the worst. How frequently has many a good and moral man renounced all the blessings which religion offers to mankind, rather than give his assent to what is marked with ignorance or cruelty !

The French, who long laboured under the severest of all slaveries in that point, and who were amused with the wonderful power of certain little pieces of wood in the shape of crosses, and a long train of other absurdities, are now become unbelievers by profession ; and, being convinced what a farce has been imposed upon them under the name of Religion, are now unhappily led to imagine, that the thing itself is a farce.

How

How happy are the Protestants, but particularly the English, in being free from those absurd prejudices which so long subjected the human mind; and which, in many countries, enslave it to this day! How happy ought we to be in having at last established a system which supports itself by its own simplicity, and the purity of its professors! where the duties it prescribes are calm and rational; and where its first obligation is that of making a man a good citizen in the society in which he is placed; and which unites the necessity of good actions to the doctrine of belief!

Though the religion of this Country, like our own, preaches Meekness and Charity, yet it is too much employed in the observance of little trivial solemnities, which are, in reality, of no moment: for an attention to every petty circumstance in life detaches the mind from all the more important duties of morality.

I own, that with every possible respect for Religion, and which every man ought to feel, I read its history with astonishment.

ment. Instead of being a detail of peace and humility, which it would naturally seem to inspire, it is nothing but a collection of wars, impiety, and murder : cruel and wicked men triumphant ; the good insulted, and frequently suffering an ignominious death ; every species of torment invented for them, under the name of religion ; fires kept alive by the bodies of those that were cast into them : and streets streaming with the blood of people, charged with no other crime than thinking differently from ourselves.

“ The proper office of Religion,” says Mr. Hume in his History of England, “ is to reform men’s lives, to purify their “ hearts, to enforce all moral duties, and “ to secure obedience to the laws and “ civil magistrate. While it pursues these “ salutary purposes, its operations, though “ infinitely valuable, are secret and silent. “ It is that adulterate species of it alone, “ which inflames faction, which ani- “ mates sedition, and prompts to every “ thing that is corrupt and wicked.”

If this is the case, what probity of heart, as well as gentleness of manners, ought those men to possess who explain
and

and enforce its doctrines in the several Countries where they are educated, and undertake that profession? Can one be so much astonished at that general system of infidelity which seems now prevailing so fast, when one reads the enormous crimes of which some of the professors of Christianity have been guilty, and which they have profanely sanctified by the name of Religion?

In turning over an old Italian author I found the following story, which is a strong example of what I advance: A Nobleman of great interest in Portugal, had married a very beautiful Lady, of whom he was passionately fond. In some revolutions of the Church, which were then talked of, the Jesuits found it necessary to secure this Nobleman to their Party. A *Religieux* was, therefore, dispatched into the family; who, by a number of different arts, insinuated himself into the good graces of the Lady. The Husband, who imagined that his visits were entirely on the part of Religion, paid little attention to them. A Brother, however, of the Lady's and an officer, began to suspect that something more than Religion might be the subject of

of these interviews; and on entering her apartment one day, he surprised the Lady and the holy Father in circumstances not the least equivocal. At such an interruption, and in such circumstances, the Lady screamed, and fainted away: the Officer advanced, and drew his sword; but the Father, neither abashed by the situation in which he had been discovered, nor intimidated by the action of the Brother, advanced towards him, "Wretch!" cried he, "how darest thou thus pry into the holy secrets of the Church, and not dread the just vengeance of the Inquisition?" At these tremendous words the Officer dropt the point of his sword.—"Well mayest thou be afraid," pursued the Father, "for thy impudence calls aloud for punishment. But go: I forgive thee. Do not, however, imagine that I have enjoyed thy Sister out of any carnal desires: No; Heaven knows the uprightness of my heart; and that the Professors of Religion are pure. The Church hath occasion for thy Brother, but he was obstinate: I took, therefore, the means of this tender Lamb," pointing to the Lady, "who has

“has an interest with her Husband, to
“effect our gracious and pious purpo-
“ses.”

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

On the Ridotto.

To Miss Lucinda B——

Edinburgh, April 6, 1775.

MY DEAR LUCINDA,

I Must beg leave to break in upon your more agreeable avocations for a moment, to acquaint you that we have had a Ridotto here.

The Manager of the Theatre had at the first proposed introducing a Masquerade: a species of entertainment hitherto unknown in a public style.

A Gentleman, indeed, attempted a private Masquerade at his own house last year; but, I am informed, he by
no

no means succeeded, for want of a proper variety of company, and their not understanding the nature and spirit of the diversion. But this was no reason with Mr. Digges why a general one in so large and public a place as the Theatre, should not stand a better chance of succeeding, than the select number of friends of any particular person. He, therefore, with the laudable intention of introducing a Masquerade, which, of all other Amusements, is of the greatest utility to trade and manufactories, declared his resolution, and fixed the evening of the entertainment: well knowing, could he once prevail on the inhabitants of the City to attend, a little experience and practice would soon give them a taste for it; and one only in a season would be no unacceptable addition to the profits of the Play-house.

Thus it continued a little time, apparently in a likely road to success: but for want of some of the principal people to patronize it, he at last perceived it would be impossible to have it in that fashionable and polite manner he could have wished; and therefore prudently changed the Masquerade to a *Ridotto*;

dotto ; which I hope has out-done his most ardent expectations in point of profit, as his proper behaviour calls on every degree of testimony to his desert.

But there was another reason why a Masquerade did not take place : Presbyterianism and the Kirk, those formidable enemies to Mirth and Jollity, pronounced their *anathema* ; and every argument was mustered up in opposition to it, that could be brought against Immorality, Vice, and the Devil. I am not certain whether it was absolutely forbid from the Pulpit ; but it is most probable it was, as the private masquerade became the subject of many a sermon, and was thundered against as the encourager of Intrigue, Libertinism, of Debauchery. Yet, so great is the power of prejudice, that, notwithstanding the same objections might have been made with equal propriety against a Ridotto, or, indeed, any other public amusement, not one word was spoken in disapprobation ; but every one united in commendation of Mr. Digges for changing it, and rejoiced, as if he had been the “ one Sinner “ that repented.”

Well,

Well, the long-expected evening arrived: the tickets were a guinea: and the whole Fashionable World of Edinburgh were assembled; some to discountenance Masquerades, others to countenance Ridotto's, and the rest to pass the evening in any agreeable manner that the place afforded, not materially concerning themselves what entertainment it was, so that Pleasure, the darling object of the mind, the dispeller of care, melancholy, and that *ennui*, which makes life itself so burdensome, was some-how or other to be obtained. Among the first tribe were the religious of all sorts and determinations, from the Minister's wife and daughter, to the antiquated Maid of sixty-six — who, having passed the grand climacteric of virginity, together with her desire for mankind, pretended an abhorrence of a recreation that might be productive of so many consequences; either through envy at the rising generation of upstart misses, lest they should be more successful than she had been; or else, through the remembrance of the advantage she would have taken of such an occasion, in days of yore,

“Before Polygamy was held a Sin.”

Of

Of the middle class were those who loved either diversion, but having purchased the annual *negligée* or dressed coat, thought the Ridotto best adapted to the œconomy of their pocket; and that the encouragement of trade was an inferior consideration to the discouragement of their own finances.

Of the last order were the Beaux, Belles, Coxcombs, and Coquettes, the jovial Votaries of Revelry and Good Humour, and all those indolent mortals, whose greatest torment is to stay at home, though too idle to leave it without regret.

Thee too, my M——, I saw thee there
Stretch'd on the rack of a too easy chair;
And heard they everlasting groan confess
The pains and penalties of Idleness.

The Pit was covered over after the manner of the Opera House in London on a like occasion. The Side-boxes were converted into reservoirs of wines, ices and every kind of refreshment: and at the upper end of the stage was an Orchestra of all the principal Musicians,
both

both vocal and instrumental; who, after the company had been assembled a short time, displayed their several abilities, and performed some pieces adapted to the purpose.

The ornaments and decorations of the other parts of the Theatre were with equal propriety, taste, and elegance. Over the boxes were the illuminated heads of the Poets, after whose names the boxes are denominated, and over the stage boxes, landscapes done in the same form, by Runciman, the Sir Joshua Reynolds of this country, and whose invention is perhaps equal to that of any painter in Europe.

The ball began with minuets danced in different parts of the room, which lasted but a short time, and then gave place to the more enlivening harmony of a country-dance; after a certain interval, an orchestra afforded entertainment to the company during the time of administering refreshments. The night was closed by the addition of French horns and clarinets, which the Gentlemen of the regiment, who were quartered here, politely provided.

You

You will wonder to hear me say, that notwithstanding there was the greatest profusion of excellent wines, not one person attempted to stay after the departure of the Ladies, and not a single glass fell a victim to excess. In this respect, the Scotch Gentlemen contradicted themselves, and with an uncommon degree of prudence and regularity, endeavoured to make the entertainment as profitable as possible to the manager, who had exerted himself to please them, and who justly had merited the general approbation.

I am sensible, after all this, you wait with expectation to hear my partner ; but for once, you must excuse my saying any thing more, than that she was handsome, extremely polite, and a good dancer. But suffer me to assure you, that however prevalent may be the power of Scotch beauty, however captivating the roseate hue, the dimpled cheek and the sparkling eye of the virgins of the North ; my heart is still impenetrable, whilst the image of Lucinda, like my guardian angel, presents itself to all other allurements, and breaks the enchantment of every other beauty. No, my
Lucinda,

Lucinda, object of all my hopes; happiness has but half its value without your participation. The Ridotto wanted nothing but you, to make it completely agreeable, and that defect diminished all its pleasures, to

Your ever sincere and affectionate friend.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

*On the Gallantry and Politeness of the
Scotch, their Intrigues, &c.*

To R. D. Esq.

Edinburgh, April 12, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

THAT imperious and disgusting character, which always arrogates to itself alone Reason and Sense, and will not allow any one else to possess them, and be in the right, I never saw in this country; and I think there is no better sign of a perfectly well-bred man, than the appearance of diffidence, with the possession of knowledge, and the giving every possible attention to the judgment and opinion of others.

The Scotch Gentlemen, in their families, at their tables, or in company, have a certain plausible civility and complaisance, which give them the appearance of virtue, and make them on the outside, what men in general ought to be within. They always seem pleased with you, and converse on subjects with which you are most acquainted, so that their guest leaves them well-pleased with himself, and consequently with them. They entertain their visitors with the highest degree of courtesy, without compliment, or formality, and rather choose to listen to the sentiments of others, than give their own opinion in a general company. *Il pensieri stretti et il volto sciolto*, is the Delphian oracle, which seems to be ever in their memory.

The Scotch Ladies also are peculiarly attentive in their own houses, and discharge the duties of their families with much ease, œconomy, and politeness. At their tables, they share with their husbands the greatest assiduity to entertain, and shew more desire to make every thing free from ceremony, than in any nation with which I have yet been conversant. The men, in general, are neither

nither disposed for Gallantry, nor formed for it, from their education or temper. They rather pay too little attention to the Ladies, which is partly occasioned by habit, partly by their genius. Notwithstanding, they associate together more, perhaps, than in some other countries; you seldom see a Scotchman putting himself to an inconvenience to accommodate or find in him any anxiety to please the other sex.

The severity of the laws of Scotland with respect to marriage, and promises relating to it, seem to keep the young men under a restraint, and hinder them from making use of the most innocent freedoms, which every where else are expected by the Ladies. A lover in Scotland is the most ignorant Thing imaginable; I mean as to address, compliments, protestations, and endearments, which are so familiar in the mouths of an English *inamorato*—In true love indeed,

“E’l silentio ancor suole

“Aver prieghi & parole.”

or else I do not know how they would communicate their passion.

Their taste in beauty is not very exquisite, though they have the finest models in the world. Large women please them most, and they pay little regard to a just symmetry of parts, complexion, or colour. The eyes are the charm which attracts them most, and whose language they best understand.

But the women are of a different nature and disposition from the men. They are all freedom, all affability, and breathe the very spirit of Gallantry. They have a certain vivacity and negligence in their behaviour, which has the most amiable appearance you can conceive. The most enchanting looks, and all the allurements of the Cyprian Queen seem to be their inheritance; which, perhaps, are rather increased than diminished by the deficiency of inflammability in the men. To rouse the latent spark, every assistance is necessary, so that it is their interest to be perfect mistresses in the art of pleasing; and indeed, they are arrived at such perfection in it, as to be excelled by none in Europe.

But I am happy to tell you, that that abandoned spirit for Intrigue, which is so predominant

predominant in our country, is as yet a perfect stranger to these northern climes. No people are more constant, faithful and sincere in their amours; and though the married may sometimes have the appearance of levity and wantonness, it is occasioned by the liberty and mode of their education. The name of adultery is hardly known; it is a *rara avis*, a phoenix which exists only once in a hundred years.

You would imagine at first the young women the least fortified against the assaults of libertinism and licentiousness, so familiar and unguarded seems their manner of intercourse with the men: but it is quite otherwise; so far from exposing them, it is their strongest defence. They acquire an effrontery and method of arguing, that baffle the seducer, and by the seeming loss of it, secure their innocence. During the whole time that I have been in Edinburgh, there has been but one instance of a false step having been made by a young lady of any kind of family or fashion; and it seems Eudocia had received her education in England. She was extremely young, having just entered into her fifteenth year,

when she was brought down hither by her father, a true Highland Laird, who fancied that his daughter possessed every female accomplishment, and that it was high time to form a connection with one of the quality of his own country. A natural vivacity of fancy, accompanied with an agreeable softness of disposition, rendered her as much the admiration of those who conversed with her, as a genteel figure, and delicate complexion, gained her the adoration of those who saw her. The retirement of a London Boarding-school, and the romantic notions she had imbibed from books which she had been permitted to read there, gave her such a taste for amusement and the fashionable pleasures of company, that, on every occasion, Eudocia was a principal party. Was there a public assembly? she was present. Was there a play? you were sure to find her in the stage box: nor was she to be seen less frequent in the public walks, than at the kirk. Wherever she appeared, she became the envy of the women, and admiration of the men; whom she attracted by her charms, who were ambitious of her attention, and assiduous of approving themselves worthy of paying her civilities.

Among

Among the crowd of her followers was Bellario: who soon conceived an affection though at first his addressee were only the effect of fashion, and the desire of conformity of taste with the rest of his acquaintance. His figure, his wit, his education, temper, every thing conspired to fit him for the conquest of the most guarded virtue.

After, therefore, walking in private, dancing with her, and exciting her love and inclination, by all the arts which experience had taught him to triumph over the unfortunate victims of his desire, he at length prevailed on her to admit him by moonlight into her chamber window, where every thing crowned his ambition, and

Cupid smil'd to see his shafts so sure.

Vanity, on one side, and that regard which a woman always discovers for the object who has deprived her of the most valuable possession, soon discovered their intercourse, and rendered their amour the topic of public conversation. Manifest signs also of her indiscretion, made it absolutely necessary for Bellario to re-

move her from her father's house, who for some time had harboured suspicions, and was just on the verge of demanding an explanation concerning his intimacy with Eudocia. At length some lucky opportunity favoured their elopement, and she was conveyed to a private lodging in London, where her paramour, soon satisfied by perpetual enjoyment, found satiety an antidote for his passion; and after a short time abandoned her to the world, deprived of a father, a friend, of every thing. The little pittance she had saved from her seducer, served but a short time to supply her necessities, till she determined to return back to Edinburgh, where she hoped for some compassion from her former acquaintance. But alas! the loss of virtue and distress are sure to attend each other. A parent deaf to every intreaty; her female associates ridiculing her misfortunes; whilst the unfaithful herd of her former admirers, who once would have died at her frown, now unpitying and unmoved, behold her misery with contempt. After a short interval, being destitute even of advice, and hardened by the cruelty of those, whose compassion only she intreated, Eudocia was ensnared by the pretended friendship

friendship of a mistress of a brothel; where a continued scene of vice is now so familiar to her, that her charms are prostituted to every lustful ruffian, who has money to pay the wages of her iniquity.

I have dwelt thus long on this history, because I know you esteem Bellario as your friend; but I hope, for the future, you will consider no man in that light, who can thus forfeit his pretensions to honour and humanity. I have often been surprised, that even the common feelings of the heart, the sympathy that we have for our fellow-creatures, have not been able to deter these assassins of innocence, though destitute of virtue, and dead to the dictates of conscience.

Happy would the world be, if instances of this kind were as seldom in other places, as in this City. Intriguing in Edinburgh is not understood: the men have no talent for it; as well from their education as their genius. I wish I could say as much for our own countrymen. But in England every day is conscious of a new Intrigue; which is not

only bad from the evil it produces, but from the crimes it naturally supposes antecedent to it. Fraud, dissimulation, and perjury, are the instruments of an Intrigue; and such instruments are not thrown away when they have served one occasion, but are laid by for other opportunities. For the same depravity, which will lead a man to be the cause of misery, shame, and affliction to a whole family, to bring with sorrow to the grave disconsolate parents, and murder with infamy the character of her he once loved, will equally induce him, where interest is concerned, to betray his brother, or sacrifice his friend.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXII.

On the Scotch Dances.

To Mrs. F——r, at Bath.

Edinburgh, April 20, 1775.

DEAR MADAM,

IF you have been informed the Scotch dance well, I beg that you will retain your favourable opinion of them, without asking mine; for, on this point, I am by no means partial to them. The Dances of this country are entirely void of grace; which appears to me to be the first principle, unless we consider it, as the Savages do, merely as an exercise.

The general Dance here is a Reel, which requires that particular sort of step to dance properly, of which none but

but people of the country can have any idea. All the English whom I have seen attempt it, were very deficient in their imitations; and though the Scotch were too polite openly to laugh at them, they saw and felt the ridicule of grown gentlemen learning to dance.

The perseverance which the Scotch Ladies discover in these Reels, is not less surprising, than their attachment to them in preference to all others. They will sit totally unmoved at the most sprightly airs of an English Country Dance; but the moment one of these tunes is played, which is liquid laudanum to my spirits, up they start, animated with new life, and you would imagine they had received an electrical shock, or been bit by a tarantula. A Lady, who, for half an hour before, has sat groaning under the weight of a large hoop and a corpulent habit of body, the instant one of these tunes is applied to her ear, shall bounce off her seat, and frisk and fly about the room to the great satisfaction of all the spectators.

These

These tunes were originally performed on the bagpipe : but you will naturally be surprised how so drowsy an instrument should be capable of inspiring such uncommon ardour. The effect which these national Dances have, and the partiality which many nations discover for them, is certainly matter of great surprise to a stranger. An ingenious writer says, " That the fury and violence which the Spaniards discover in dancing the Fandango, the original Dance of their country, can only be compared to the fire and eagerness of the Italian horses before the barrier is let down for their running." This violence, making an allowance for the different heat of the different climates, is equally discoverable in the Scotch.

The young people in England, you know, only consider Dancing as an agreeable means of bringing them together ; and, was not gallantry to be of the party, I am afraid we should most of us think it a very stupid sort of a meeting. But the Scotch admire the Reel for its own merit alone, and may truly be said to dance for the sake of Dancing. I have often sat a very wearied

ried spectator of one of these Dances, in which not one graceful movement is seen, the same invariably, if continued for hours. How different is this from the *Allemande* ! A Scotchman comes into an assembly-room as he would into a field of exercise, dances till he is literally tired, possibly without ever looking at his partner, or almost knowing who he dances with. In most countries the men have a partiality for dancing with a woman ; but here I have frequently seen four gentlemen perform one of these Reels seemingly with the same pleasure and perseverance as they would have done, had they had the most sprightly girl for a partner. The Reel is the only thing which gives them pleasure : if the figure is formed, it appears, no matter with what ; and they give you the idea, that they could, with equal glee, cast off round a joint stool, or set to a corner cupboard.

Another of the national Dances is a kind of quick minuet, or what the Scotch call a *Straspaë*. We in England are said to *walk* a minuet : this is galloping a minuet. The French one is esteemed by all the people at the Opera,

ra, as particularly elegant, and affording the greatest opportunity possible for a fine woman to display her figure to advantage. In this of the Scotch, however, every idea of grace seems inverted, and the whole is a burlesque: nothing of the minuet is preserved, except the figure; the step and the time most resemble an hornpipe—and I leave you to dwell upon the picture of a gentleman full-dressed, and a lady in an hoop, lappets, and every other incumbrance of ornament, dancing an hornpipe before a large assembly.

To those who may be fond of these dances, what I have said will be called prejudice. I flatter myself you will not think so: for I should esteem myself infinitely below your regard, could I be carried away by so ridiculous a passion upon any subject, much less upon such an one as this; where one may truly say, "*Le Feu ne vaut pas la Chandelle.*" But without any partiality to our own, or any other country, I shall not hesitate to say, the Scotch dance more ungracefully than any other people I have yet seen. The Swiss, who are far from being a refined or polished nation, dance
naturally,

naturally, in the most graceful style imaginable: two young peasants, with no other ornaments but chearful, healthy looks, and sprightly countenances, shall discover, in a little rural *Allemande*, as many expressive and striking attitudes, as many fine inclinations of figure, as would be applauded on a stage. The Scotch, however, have nothing but their enthusiasm and activity to recommend them. It is no civility to attempt to shew them any thing new: they hold their dances sacred, and will bear no innovation on that point. Cotillons, and other French dances, have not travelled so far north—And you may tell them (for I suppose you are at present in the midst of them) that they might as well stay where they are.

The Ladies, however, to do them justice, dance much better than the men. But I once had the honour of being witness to a reel in the Highlands, where the party consisted of three maiden ladies, the youngest of whom was above fifty, which was conducted with gestures so uncouth, and a vivacity so hideous, that you would have thought

thought they were acting some midnight ceremonies, or enchanting the moon.

The gravest men here, with the exception of the ministers, think it no disgrace to dance. I have seen a professor, who has argued most learnedly and most wisely in a morning, forgetting all his gravity in an evening, and dance away to the best of his abilities.

The lower class of people here are as fond of dancing as their betters: they have their little parties and private rooms, where they indulge themselves in this pleasure; and frequently, when the labors and the fatigues of the day are over, they refresh themselves by a Dance. This is an odd custom: but they are not singular in it: a French Peasant does just the same.

I have exceeded the usual bounds of a letter, and it is full time to put an end to this. I am much afraid (to use a common expression) 'that I have led you such a dance,' you will not wish to hear from me again soon. I owe you more than I can express to you, when I remember that, in the midst of gaiety and diversion,

diversion, and surrounded by admirers, you could find time to cast a thought upon a man who is at present four hundred miles from you. If I can be happy enough in future to give you any information on subjects more calculated to entertain you, it will, in reality, be conferring a pleasure on me, in the opportunity it will afford me of perusing your letters.

I have the honour to be, Dear Madam, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

The Climate, and its Influence.

To R. D. Esq.

Edinburgh, April 25, 1775.

SIR,

I Have hitherto delayed giving you any account of the climate of this Country, as I was resolved to wait till I could send you an opinion of my own, or at least form some judgment of the truth of that of others.

The natives of this Country, who have travelled much into warmer climates, tell you, that Scotland is far colder than England, and that you cannot clothe yourself too warmly in winter. As to myself, I have not as yet found any of these precautions necessary, and I wear just the same number of cloaths I should

should do in England at this season of the year.

Though this winter has hitherto been very mild, I can easily perceive that the weather is much more changeable than it is in England, and that frequently you experience all the seasons in one day. In the middle of it, when the Sun is in his meridian, the heat is sometimes extremely powerful; and in the evening you have all that piercing cold you might expect here in winter. From these reasons the Medical People say, that it is the worst climate in the world for the use of mercurial medicines; that in very few constitutions they have any effect; and that in many they are entirely fatal. I have been assured from the best authority, that in many venereal cases the proper remedies are impracticable, and that it has been frequently found necessary to remove the patient into England, in order to establish a cure. It is probably to be attributed to this cause, that they have in Scotland, a disorder which they call the "*Sibbens*," and which is a compound of the Scotch and venereal disease that has hitherto baffled all the aids of medicine. Its consequences are the most
baneful

baneful that can be conceived, as it gradually destroys every part of the human frame, before it puts an end to life; and, if what I am told is true, it is still more dreadful—as it is to be caught by merely touching an infected person, and not in the manner of the common venereal disorder.

The most particular effect which I find of this Climate, is the Winds; which here reign in all their violence, and seem indeed to claim the country as their own. A person, who has passed all his time in England, cannot be said to know what a wind is: he has zephyrs, and breezes, and gales, but nothing more; at least they appear so to me after having felt the hurricanes of Scotland.

As this Town is situated on the borders of the sea, and surrounded by hills of an immense height, the currents of air are carried down between them with a rapidity and a violence which nothing can resist. It has frequently been known, that in the New Town at Edinburgh three or four people have scarce been able to shut the door of the house; and it

it is a very common accident to hear of sedan chairs being overturned. It seems almost a necessary compliment here, to wait upon a lady the next morning, to hope she got safe home. In many visits which I have made since I came here, two people have been obliged to go on each side of the chair, to keep it even, while other two have carried it; and sometimes even this precaution has not been sufficient. Not many days ago an Officer, whom I have the honour of being acquainted with, a man of six feet high, and, one would imagine, by no means calculated to be the sport of winds, was, however, in following another gentleman out of the Castle, lifted up by their violence from the ground, carried over his companion's head, and thrown at some distance on the stones. This, I can assure you, is a literal fact.

At other times, the winds, instead of rushing down with impetuosity, whirl about in eddies, and become still more dreadful. On these occasions it is almost impossible to stir out of doors, as the dust and stones gathered up in these vortices not only prevent your seeing, but frequently cut your legs by the velocity

locity with which they are driven. The Scotch have a garticular appellation for this, "*The Stour.*"

The chief scene where these winds exert their influence, is the New Bridge, which, by being thrown over a long valley that is open at both ends, and particularly from being ballustraded on each side, admits the wind in the most charming manner imaginable; and you receive it with the same force you would do, were it conveyed to you through a pair of bellows. It is far from unentertaining for a man to pass over this bridge on a tempestuous day. In walking it this morning I had the pleasure of adjusting a lady's petticoats which had been blown almost entirely over her head, and which prevented her disengaging herself from the situation she was in: but in charity to her distresses, I concealed her charms from public view: one poor gentleman, who was rather too much engaged with the novelty of the objects before him, unfortunately forgot his own hat and wig, which were lifted up by an unpremeditated puff, and carried entirely away.

But

But though the bleak air of this Climate may give, as it is said to do, that keen and penetrating look to the inhabitants, which they certainly possess, as well as great activity of body, they are far from being healthy in general. I have scarce met with one instance of remarkable longevity amongst all the people I have seen, and there are very few places where you observe more funerals. Whether this is to be attributed entirely to the climate, or in some part to the College of Physicians, who are very eminent in their profession, I leave you to determine for yourself.

There is one circumstance here which certainly deserves notice, as it is a contradiction to all the rules which are laid down in regard to climates; I mean, the early maturity of their women. It is generally imagined that cold has the same degree of influence over the animal, as it has over the vegetable world; but in this country they are in direct opposition; for the plants are very late, and the girls extremely forward.

In reading Mr. Wraxall's Account of Sweden the other day, I found an observation

ervation of the same kind, which he attributes to their constantly bathing in warm baths during the winter time; but then he remarks, they want that firmness of flesh, that elasticity which is so desirable to an Englishman, and of which, indeed, this young Author complains with great feeling.

I imagine, however, that the early maturity of the Scotch girls cannot be attributed to the same cause. Many of the ladies marry at fifteen; and many of the married ladies at twenty-five, look no younger than some of the English women at forty. This early loss of beauty may, in some measure, proceed from a negligence of their persons the moment they are married, as if, on that important day, all future desires of pleasing were to be closed, and one dark cloud of constancy and indifference was to shade the whole scene.

In regard to the productions of the earth, this Country is certainly later than any part of England by some weeks; and in the Highlands a great quantity of the corn never ripens upon

the ground, but is cut wet and unripe, and dried by being hung up under cover.

Notwithstanding all the care that can be taken, very little fruit is to be got here; and indeed the very best is so bad, that it is scarce worth the rearing. As they have no Spring in this Climate, nothing of what the Italians express by the *Gioventu' del anno*, all the blossoms are either destroyed by the frosts, or the ripening is thrown so late in the season, that the succeeding Winter sweeps them away before they can arrive at any perfection. In the month of May, which, in the Southern parts of England, is frequently the most agreeable month in the whole year, they have here certain winds, which blow from a particular quarter sometimes during the whole month, and answer in some measure, to the *trade winds*, which render it, as I am informed, the most disagreeable month in the year. The fine weather is seldom entirely formed till the beginning or the middle of July, and continues till the end of October; the remaining months all pass under the denomination of winter. They seem to have only two seasons, Summer and Winter;

Winter ; as frequently the most sultry weather immediately succeeds to the coldest and most tempestuous.

I mean to trouble you with only one observation more, with which a person must be struck in every part of this Country, and which they attribute to the Climate—it is the extreme ugliness of all the common people. How often have we heard air and exercise recommended as the only preservatives of beauty ! How often have the Poets carried us back to the charms and graces, and I know not what, of former ages, when people passed their whole lives in the open air ? How often are we seriously told, by moralists, to look for beautiful persons amongst peasants, and not in the artificial splendor of a drawing-room, or the counterfeit brilliancy of a court ! I only wish, that all these pretty declaimers would take a short excursion into this Country, to be convinced how idle all their suppositions are : they would find a country in which temperance and labour are in the extreme ; and where, instead of ruddy cheeks, sprightly countenances, and

graceful figures, they would behold haggard looks, meagre complexions, and bodies that are weakened by fatigue, and worn down by the inclemency of the seasons.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIV.

Funerals, and the Mode of conducting them.

To R. D. Esq;

Edinburgh, April 28, 1775.

SIR,

I Know no place where you behold more frequent Funerals than in this City, and they are conducted with a silence and solemnity which makes sorrow appear still more dismal. On these occasions, in England, you know, no distress is seen; for, as the afflicted hire others to mourn for them, it cannot be supposed that people should be affected by distresses which are nothing to them. An Englishman seems to carry with him the same desires out of life, which he had in it; and as all

his pleasure was centered in going post, you frequently meet his hearse at a full gallop, as if, after having been in a hurry all his lifetime, it was decreed he should find no rest even in death.

In this place, instead of applying to an undertaker for a groupe of grim figures, and dismal faces, they send a card, as the French do, to all the persons of their acquaintance, desiring their attendance at the Funeral. If the people who are invited do not really feel sorrow in compliment at least they affect to do so ; and therefore, you are not shocked with any ill-timed mirth or outward signs of insensibility. They all dress themselves at these meetings in a suit of black, which has something in it peculiarly mournful : all the nearest relations, besides putting on weepers, which are common with us, fix a long piece of muslin to the collar of the shirt, that hangs down before as far as the middle of the waist. They continue this fashion all the time they wear their first mourning, and sometimes the excess of their grief is in proportion to these pieces of muslin.

In

In the Funerals of the lower classes of people, the procession is always on foot. The coffin is carried by four people, the minister walks before it, and all the friends and relations follow. They proceed with a slow, solemn pace to the Kirk: and as the relationship extends itself a great way in this Country, a whole street is sometimes nearly filled with this sable procession.

Persons of higher rank are carried on hearses; but with none of that ostentatious pomp and ceremony which is so frequent, and generally so ridiculous in England. The vanity of people in this Country dies with them. You are never astonished with a display of which they can be no longer sensible, and from whence no gratification can be derived, but one of the most melancholy and disgusting nature: an hearse, followed by a mourning coach, is all the parade that you see; and if a man has done nothing in life worth remembering, he has no chance of making himself immortal by his Funeral. The undertakers seem the only people who suffer by all this humility; they neither find people to mourn, nor plumes of feathers, nor

carriages, nor any of those *insignia mortis* which few people would think of having, could they only see the bill.

There is one instance of politeness which the Scotch shew each other, and which, as far as mere ceremonial can be agreeable, is certainly so: whenever a relation of any family dies, the first visit made to them by their friends and even acquaintances, is always made in mourning, as if to sympathise with their distress. This piece of form they observe with great care; and a person would be thought a strange creature who should go dressed in colours to the house of mourning. This custom is never repeated. From these civilities, and the frequent mournings which the numerous relationship occasion, many families are almost constantly clothed in black; and on entering a large room full of company, one would sometimes imagine that an epidemical disorder was raging in the Town, and that every one of them had lost some near relation. But whether it is from the constant habit of mourning that the occasion of it loses in some measure its effect, or that they are a nation of philosophers, they do not appear to me to feel with
all

all that lively and tender sensibility, which is visible in some countries. They weep for a little time, they then begin to think of something fashionable for a mourning dress, and every thing goes on as before. The widows, indeed, put on so very sorrowful an appearance, and wrap themselves so intirely in black, that one would imagine they had devoted the rest of their lives to melancholy, and never intended to take another husband. But yet, in spite of all this, many of them do, and “mourn their loves like the “*Dame of Ephesus*.” I remember reading a story, which is far from being a bad comment on these extravagant ladies: For want of something better, I will conclude this letter with it.

“An Indian woman came to the go-
“vernor of the town where she lived,
“and told him that as her husband was
“dead, she hoped he would give her
“leave to burn herself alive, according
“to the custom of her country. The
“governor, who had long endeavoured
“to discourage these practices, refused
“to grant her request. ‘How!’ cried
“the woman, ‘not burn myself! here
“is a governor for you indeed! A poor
“widow

“ widow only asks leave to burn herself
“ for the good of the public, and she
“ cannot obtain permission to do so! My
“ mother, my aunts, and my sisters all
“ burnt themselves in a creditable man-
“ ner, and here, unfortunate as I am, I
“ only civilly desire to do the same, and
“ it is denied to me!” A young bonze,
“ who was standing by, and pleased with
“ the resolution of the woman, told her,
“ she was doing what was agreeable to
“ her Deity, and that she would certain-
“ ly be rewarded in the next world, by
“ again meeting her husband, and being
“ married to him anew. ‘How!’ cried
“ she, ‘meet my husband again, and be
“ married anew to an old, jealous man!
“ Burn yourself, if you please; I want
“ no such rewards. I was in hopes to
“ have made myself celebrated; but if
“ that is all the recompence I am to
“ have, I might as well stay where I am
“ and therefore, Mr. Governor, I beg
“ leave to obey your commands.”

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

On the Laws of Scotland.

To C. C——r, Esq; the Temple, London.

Edinburgh, May 2, 1775.

SIR,

YOU desire me to send you some account of the Laws of this country: I should be very happy were it in my power to give you any information on this subject more adequate to your wishes. But without teasing you with apologies for what I cannot do, I will send you the best and shortest detail of them I can; and if I should not speak with all the precision such a topic may require, you will forgive me, I hope, when you remember, that all the little knowledge I have obtained, has been picked up at intervals, and by accident, in the course of a few months.

The

The Laws of Scotland have been collected to them from various places, and may be said to be the children of many fathers. They have their statutory or written Law, which comprehends the acts of parliament, made in the reign of James the First of Scotland; all those down to the Union with England; and, since the Union, all the acts which have passed the English Legislature in regard to Scotland. It comprehends likewise their acts of Sederunt, which are ordinances for regulating the forms of proceeding before the Court of Session, the Civil and the Canon Laws. Their unwritten or customary Law, is that which has gained its title by prescription, and been confirmed by subsequent decisions.

The penal Laws of Scotland are, in general, highly remarkable for their lenity, and as merciful as is consistent with the good of society. In cases of murder, the intention of the criminal, the *animus injuriandi* must be proved to infer the crime. In the old Laws of this country there was a privilege reserved for that which was committed in sudden and inconsiderate acts of passion; but it was taken away afterwards, and homicide judged

judged to be a capital crime without any such distinction. I know there are writers, and those sensible ones, who would, in no case, inflict the punishment of death. They say, that perpetual slavery would have a much greater effect in the eyes of every society, than the execution of a criminal: that momentary terror is not the object we are to aim at, but a series of remorse and detestation: that the contempt and indignation with which every one regards an executioner, is a proof in what light every one looks on the punishment of death; and that it is absurd, that those very Laws, which condemn and punish homicide, should, in order to prevent murder, publicly commit murder themselves. But without entering into a disquisition, whether such a punishment is of benefit or not to the community, you will observe that the Scotch only act in obedience to that principle, which directs, at present, all other nations in this offence. The law of Moses was the law of retaliation, and commanded, that he who had spilt the blood of another, should lose his own. Acts of mutilation and demembration are not punished with death in this Country. They have no "Black Act," as in England:

land: the punishment is the escheat of the possessions of the offender, which is far from being adequate to the crime.

The Laws of this country are equally severe with our own in regard to duelling. The man who kills his adversary in single combat, is punished with death; but in all probability, a lenient interpretation would be given. The giver and receiver of a challenge, whether principal or second, is liable to be banished, and to have his possessions confiscated, even should no such combat take place. No similar case has occurred to my knowledge; but I imagine that the letter of this regulation would not be punctually complied with. Though there is no writing in the absolute defence of duels, I cannot but still think there are many and valid reasons for their being tolerated in every country. A thousand possible cases may occur, in which a man can have no redress, but by an appeal to the sword, and in which every other mode of terminating the dispute, would in some measure, but aggravate the injury. In short, in all those cases which alone affect a man's honour, and of which his own feelings only can be the judge,

judge, the law of arms is the last and only resource. On this point no preventive laws can ever take effect. A man of sentiment only wishes to live so long as he can live with honour; nor can he ever balance betwixt the desire of life, and becoming an object of contempt and derision. The only regulation that can ever be of service in this respect, would be either making duels disgraceful, or erecting a court of honour, to judge of the necessary reparation due to affronts.

The Laws against false imprisonment are nearly the same as with us. Every person who is wrongfully committed, has an act of damages against the judge or person who is guilty, from six hundred down to four hundred pounds Scots, according to his rank. These damages are seldom modified by the Court of Session; and with great propriety, as no greater and more real injustice can be done to society, than robbing an innocent man of his liberty, detaining him in a loathsome prison amongst those who are presumed to be guilty, and affixing upon him a degree of infamy, which will not so easily pass away. The generality

nerality of the world, we know, never enquire whether a man is really culpable or not ; they always conclude that he is so, from being in the circumstances of those that are culpable.

What is worthy of observation is, that there is no explicit statute in Scotland which punishes the commission of a rape with death. One would imagine, that the Scotch were great casuists on this point, and were fearful of drawing the line betwixt the unconsenting reluctance of Modesty, and the determined resistance of a tenacious and obstinate virtue, which is subdued only by force.

By the old Laws of Scotland, the punishment of theft was in proportion to the things stolen. This is increased gradually, and punished with death, if the value of the theft amounts to thirty-two pennies Scotch, which, in the time of David the First, was the price of two sheep. In modern practice, however, the simple crime of stealing, unattended with any aggravating circumstances, such as breaking into an house, or using violence, is punished by banishment, imprisonment, or the loss of effects ; which is the method

thod that reason would suggest. It is observable, that neither the Laws of Moses, nor those of Rome, punished theft capitally. The Marquis Beccaria, in his excellent Treatise on Crimes and Punishments, says, "That the punishment
" of robbery, not attended with violence,
" ought always to be pecuniary: that
" the man who endeavours to enrich
" himself with the property of another,
" should, in return, be deprived of part
" of his own: that in all cases, there
" should be a relation betwixt the crime
" and the punishment; but that betwixt
" the robbing of one person and the
" death of another, there is no similitude whatever."

It is an honour, in my opinion, to the Laws of Scotland, that in judging of this crime, they are so lenient; and the equitable consequences that flow from it, are a convincing proof, that it is as good in fact as in theory. The banishment of a citizen to other countries is a loss to his own; nor does he in the least benefit that society to which he is removed, by his example, because it is distant from the place where the crime was committed.

The

The aggravation of theft, which arises from the criminal having been before convicted of the same, and by which he becomes habit and repute a thief, is punishable, however, with death. The reason of this is just and obvious: the end of all punishment is to correct and to amend the offender; but here, it is visible, they have lost their effect. The man who has seen the evil consequences of such deeds, who has already experienced the lenity of the Laws, but who voluntarily and premeditatedly again offends society, by repeating his transgressions, can no longer be bound by the Laws; and therefore, unfit to be a member of society.

The crimes of piracy here are tried before the High Admiral, and punishable with death.

Forgery, if the deed has been put to use, is a capital offence. Where a person is found guilty of forgery by the Court of Session, he is by them remitted to the Justiciary; an indictment is there exhibited against him, and a jury sworn, before whom the decree already given by the Court of Session is held in place

place of all other evidence, and in respect of which the offender is found guilty.

The punishment of perjury, or swearing falsely on an assize, is here punished by confiscation of moveables, imprisonment for a year, and infamy. Even all this, in my opinion, is too small. The man who endeavours to take away the life of another, by an oath falsely taken, ought, on conviction, to lose his own. Great allowance should certainly be made by every Judge for inadvertency, forgetfulness, &c. but when wilful and direct perjury is evident on the very face of the deposition; when he deposes in one part to what he contradicts in another; in short, when his whole visible intention is to deprive another man of his property or his life, the sentence of retaliation is the smallest that ought to take place against him. The same disposition which would lead a witness, in a cool and dispassionate manner, in the eye of the Public, in the solemnity of a court of justice, in total disregard of truth, to swear away the life of a fellow-creature, would induce him

him to take it away by any other means, if he had the chance to escape.

I have now, I think, given you all the leading outlines of those more atrocious offences, which, by the Scotch Law, extend their consequences to life, exile, imprisonment, or heavy pecuniary fines. You will observe great clemency in the letter; and I can assure, you, from some little knowledge of my own, and from better information, there is equal mildness observed in the interpreting of them. Independent of these, there are other institutions which do the Scotch equal honour. No person can be imprisoned in order for trial, without a warrant in writing expressing the cause, and proceeding upon a subscribed information. Every prisoner in this country, committed to trial, if the crime be not a capital one, of which he is accused, is entitled to be released on giving bail. I do not mention these circumstances as confined to this country alone; I mention them as marks of liberty, justice, and sound reason. Every man who is tried here, on a prosecution of an higher nature, is tried before a jury of fifteen men, chosen and agreed to

to by himself, out of a body of forty-five. On this trial, it is necessary, by the Laws of Scotland, that the jury should be unanimous in their verdict, either in condemning or acquitting the accused: the smallest possible majority either way is sufficient. The wrong and perverted judgment of one individual can alone affect his own single voice; the rest are left at liberty to vote according to their consciences. The juries in Scotland have now an uncontroverted right to give what verdict they think proper: By the old Laws, they had not a liberty to acquit a prisoner when there was a clear proof of his guilt. A remarkable case of this kind once happened, in which a jury of the prisoner's peers pronounced him innocent, when there was the most undoubted evidence of his being guilty. A jury of twenty-five Gentlemen of landed property were called upon to try this writ of error in assize, and the former jury were punished by imprisonment for a year, forfeiture of moveables, and infamy. The mode is now abolished.

The execution of sentence passed on a criminal is now limited to eight days on the south side of the river Forth,
and

and twelve days on the north side of it, by an act of the third of George the Second. Formerly the term was of much longer continuance, and a criminal was suffered to remain sometimes forty days in the horrors of darkness, uncertain of his fate, and executed at last. It is in reality the highest act of clemency as well as justice, that sentences should be executed immediately; that they should appear in the eyes of the common people what they really are, the consequence of the crime, and that the ideas of crime and punishment should be associated as much as possible.

I have not determined upon what apology I can make for sending so much Law to a Lawyer without a fee. I know, however, you are a patriot, and that you will be happy to see a code of Laws so favourable to the liberty of mankind, in a country which has been celebrated for sentiments of a very different nature. With what justice they have been blamed, I leave you to determine, and how far you are to trust those who make a trade of scandal, and live by defamation. Should you not inform me in your next letter,

ter, that you are already sick of the subject, I shall take the liberty to continue these remarks.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVI.

The Commissary Court, and other inferior Courts.

To C. C—r, Esq. the Temple, London,

Edinburgh, May 5, 1775.

SIR,

AFTER having made you acquainted with some of the laws of Scotland, it is but proper that I should now introduce you to some of the courts where those laws are dispensed: “Where
“the poor and the fatherless are taken
“compassion on, and where those are
“helped to right who suffer wrong.” Let us visit, if you please, the Commissary Court, which is situated in a place called the Parliament Close, and which, though it has not the most promising appearance, is still a Court of some business and great importance. It is a little room of about ten feet square, and, from the darkness and dirtiness of it,

it, you would rather imagine that those who were brought into it, were confined there. To this Chamber of Justice you ascend by a narrow, dismal, winding stair-case, and where you are in danger of falling every step you take. During the reign of Popery, and the infallibility of the Pope, this Court was styled *Curia Christianitatis*; but alas! times are much altered both with the Pope and the Court; and since the Head has been found to be very fallible, some people seem to think, that the Members are not less so.

At present this Court acknowledges the King as its Lord; and he appoints the four Judges who preside there. Their powers are still very extensive, and their abilities very great: though, to speak the truth, they have occasion for them all; for, as Scrub says, "They have a power of business upon their hands." All those ladies who want husbands, and who can no longer do without them, set forth their necessities in the prettiest manner possible, and are relieved. All those ladies too, who are tired of the husbands they have already got, and are very desirous of getting quit of them in a decent manner,

manner, mention their wants, and are relieved likewise.—Nothing can come amiss to so much Justice.—The Commisfaries know the wants of the ladies, and satisfy them all in the most obliging manner.

Sometimes a very amiable and modest lady comes to make her complaint in regard to the impotence of her husband; and favours them (for they love precision) with an agreeable detail of what he cannot do. They immediately take compassion on so much virtue and delicacy, and give her an opportunity of meeting with better fortune another time. In short, I can hardly enumerate the cases they treat successfully: it is said they perform more Cures than the whole College of Physicians, and are particularly famous for giving ease in desperate complaints.

But it is not to these instances alone their attention is confined: — they fulfil and interpret the last wills and testaments of the Dead. The desires of the Living are easily known and satisfied; but the intentions of those who are gone are not soon discovered: but that is nothing;

thing; for the Commissaries know every thing.

In all the trials which come before this Court, the evidences there given, are taken down in writing, which is not only very tedious, but unnecessary; for, properly, every Court ought to hear the witnesses themselves. Every witness does not literally speak the truth, but his countenance always does. It often happens, indeed too often, that a man's looks give the lie to every thing he says, and that you read in his face the designed purpose of deceiving you. How is this to be carried down upon paper? Who is to mark this to other Judicatures before whom it may appear? Who shall draw the exact line betwixt the doubtful timidity, the bashful hesitation of a modest man who speaks the truth, and the unconcerned impudence of a fellow who disregards every thing and every body, and who has got his evidence by heart? You frequently find, that the most plausible evidence upon paper, is that which you would least have trusted from the witness's own mouth. The testimony, likewise, in this Court, is given by Interrogatories; which is certainly the

worst method that could be devised for finding out the truth—as they frequently suggest to a witness what he is to say. The Law very justly forbids all interrogations which directly tend to condemn a man's self; according to its own Maxim, “*Nemo tenetur jurare in suam turpitudinem;*” and yet authorises an immediate question which suggests the condemnation of another, and which, in all human probability, had the witness been left to tell the fact in his own terms, he never meant to say.

The Oath that is here administered to a witness is reckoned peculiarly solemn; and those who entertain very favourable opinions of human nature, think it so solemn that it is impossible that any one should break it.—That you may judge of that matter I send it to you. The evidence is ordered to kneel down, to lay his right hand upon the bible, and to repeat these words after the Judge:

“I renounce all the blessings contained in this holy book, if I do not tell the truth: I wish all the curses therein contained may be my portion, if I do not tell the truth: and I swear
“by

“ by the Almighty God himself, as I
 “ shall answer to Him at the great day
 “ of judgment, that I will tell the truth,
 “ the whole truth, and nothing but the
 “ truth.”

All this, I will grant you, is very solemn, and what no person of any feeling would think of violating—but over a villain all ties are insufficient.

But what is the most extraordinary of all is, that they do not bring out this great Oath in all cases; but have, what they call, *a little Oath*, to serve common occasions. My God, Sir, *a little Oath*! What a prostitution of terms! As if, in the eye of a man of feeling and understanding, all oaths were not equally binding. Can such legislators wonder that very little attention should be paid even to the greatest oath? Indeed I much fear that a very trifling degree of confidence is to be placed in a man, who is called upon to give his testimony in a cause where his own interest is deeply concerned. Montesquieu says, “ *C’est toujours par*
 “ *un retour sur eux-mêmes que les hommes*
 “ *agissent: nul n’est mauvais gratuitement:*
 “ *il faut qu’il y ait une raison qui détermine;*

“*et cette raison est toujours une raison d'intérêt.*” If this be true, which I am afraid it is, very little regard is ever to be paid to any evidence when not corroborated by circumstances; and indeed the greatest judges have never paid any. Circumstances and probability are the only foundations on which any reliance is to be placed. Evidences have been bought and sold: the worst will swear according to orders; and even the best mistake meanings, and give interpretations of their own. But circumstances can never deceive; and every man is a judge how far such an act is probable.

The gentlemen who officiate in the Commissary Court are styled proctors, and are in general very ignorant of every thing but their business. The Advocates do not plead in this Court; they sometimes give in Memorials like the *Procurateurs* in the French courts; and it is on the ingenuity of these that the cause frequently turns. These Memorials are intended, it is said, to “elucidate justice;”—by which is meant each party makes it out in his own favour.

But what will surprise you most in this Court is, that the Judges are paid their salaries

salaries from the causes which come under their hands. You may imagine that such a thing is impossible; but I assure you it is a fact; and though nothing can be more improper, nothing is more true. I am naturally inclined to think every man honest: I would imagine they acted from a principle incapable of being corrupted; but I am very sorry to think that there is such an opening for injustice on the one hand, and for injurious suspicions on the other. When a Judge affixes such a particular sum of money for such a particular sentence, moderated, as he supposes, to the abilities of the party, how liable is he to be deceived? or rather, how is it possible that he can be otherwise? how dishonourable is it that Justice should be purchased? and how much more disgraceful, that one man should buy it at one price, and another man at another? If it is to be brought to market, there should be one fixed market-price, and every man ought to pay the same for it as his neighbours.

You will remember with me how much that act, which made the Judges salaries independant of the Crown, was admired

in England ; tho' the interests of Government could not often interfere with those of individuals, and consequently but remotely to be dreaded. But what alterations will you think necessary here, when a Judge has it in his power to set what value he pleases on the decrees which his office and a common regard to justice oblige him to give : when he is permitted to say, " Thus much shalt thou pay me ; I decreed in thy favour, " and I demand it."

In the most disinterested hands such a power is always liable to suspicion. When there arises a contest betwixt a remote and doubtful principle of Equity, and an immediate and certain one of Advantage ; when the pronouncing one kind of sentence produces such a sum of money, and another such a sum ; what a fund of innate honour must that man possess, who invariably and constantly determines according to what is just and right, without any regard to emoluments of his own ! But should this licence ever fall into dishonest men's hands, and such a case may happen, I should tremble not only for the sake of those unfortunate people who might chance
to

to come under their decision, but for the very being of Justice herself. Many of them, I imagine, would cry out with the poor Peasant in the French Comedy, "Alas! I have gained my Process, and have lost all my Money."

There still remain three other inferior Courts, which I will mention to you before I conclude this letter.

The first is that of the Bailies'; which is likewise situated in the Parliament-close. It sits in the forenoon three days in every week; where one of the Bailies of the Town (who answers to our Common Councilmen) presides. He is informed and assisted in his office by one of the City Assessors, who is to be an Advocate. In this Court both civil and criminal cases are tried; but the criminal ones are not to be of a capital nature, or infer death.

Another is styled the Dean of Gild's Court; who is a Magistrate of the Borough, and has cognizance of the mercantile causes in the Borough.

The third is the Sheriff's Court; and is intended for the convenience of the Poor, and the recovery of Small Debts. Ten marks is the highest sum that can be sued for in this court, except in the case of servants wages, which are not limited. An old writer says, "Thate
" for the ease of saide Poore the ex-
" pence of a proceſſe amounteth onlie
" to sex-pence." This is a pleasant kind of a Court, and might furnish a good example to all its neighbours. But the Law, which is a nice observer of forms, and hates innovations of all sorts, will neither receive good counsel, nor profit by good example. Law and Physic, from the extravagance of the charges in each, were once the subject of frequent comparisons; but the parallel will hold no longer. A man who cannot afford to be regularly well, steps out of the prescribed road, and applies to a Quack, where, by taking a bottle of the "Restorative Electuary," or the "Elixir of Life," he either gets well, or is put out of the power of making complaints. But the man who is aggrieved "in the means whereby he lives," finds no person ready to do his business for a little money; and though he may begin

begin *sub forma Pauperis*, he always finishes in that condition. In this profession there are no Quacks who advertise "No Cure no pay," and who tell you, as they do in medicine, "if your case is bad, never mind: if you are a dying, so much the better—come to me, I shall cure you."

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

The Supreme Courts of Edinburgh.

To C. C——r, Esq. the Temple, London.

Edinburgh, May 7, 1775.

SIR,

IN my last letter, I mentioned to you the inferior Courts which are held in this City; in compliance with your request, I now send you some little account of what are styled here the Supreme ones. I have only your own desires to plead against the dulness of such a subject.

The Judge who is appointed to try all the maritime causes, civil as well as criminal,

minal, is named the High Admiral. His jurisdiction extends likewise to all such as fall within flood-mark, the harbours, and the creeks. In these cases, his power is sole and absolute, nor subject to a review of the Court of Session, except by reduction or suspension: but they can carry no cause against him.

The Court of Exchequer exercises its jurisdiction in all questions of the revenue. It consists, properly speaking, of the Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain, a Chief Baron, with four other Barons of Exchequer. These Barons, to obtain their title, must be serjeants at law, English barristers, or Scotch advocates of five years standing. The Barons enjoy all the privileges which belong to the Lords of Session. This Court extends its jurisdiction to the duties of the customs and excise. It is said, I know not with what truth, that there is more villainy and perjury to be met with in this Court than in any other in Scotland; which is, I assure you, saying a great deal.

The Supreme criminal Judge in this kingdom was anciently styled the Justiciar.

ticiar. He held two courts every year at Edinburgh, where all the freeholders of the kingdom were assembled; but this, as you may easily suppose, from the inconveniencies of the custom, went out of practice. Eight deputies were then appointed, from which number every quarter of the kingdom had two assigned them as Judges, who were to make their circuits in April and October. This mode was afterwards changed; and five of the Lords of Session were added under the title of Lords Commissioners of Justiciary, to the Justice General. Two of these Judges are appointed to hold Circuits in certain boroughs of each district, into which they go twice a year. In case of illness or other accidents, one Judge may proceed to business, without the assistance of his brother.

The last Court, with which I shall close this long account, is that of the Lords of Session, which is the Supreme one in this country, and to which all others appeal. It is not only considered as competent to points of Law, but of Equity, and may be said to unite in itself the two powers of the Court of King's Bench and the Court of Chancery.

cery. The decisions which are given here are universally respected in this country, and I believe with justice. They are subject, however, to be reviewed by the English House of Peers, to whom the privileges of the Scotch parliament were conveyed. In some instances, the decrees of these Supreme Courts have been different: the most remarkable one was that of the Douglas cause, in which the decisions were directly opposite. I leave it to themselves to reconcile these different ideas of justice; the Scotch, however, in general, still retain their opinions.

The Court of Session took its name from being appointed to hold a certain number of sessions in one place, instead of being unfixed and itinerant as it was formerly. In its origin, it consisted of seven laymen and seven churchmen, with a president, who was generally a prelate; but when churchmen were disqualified from temporal jurisdiction, they lost their seats, and have never since resumed them.

The Judges of this Court, who cannot become such till after twenty-five years

years of age, have always been received by warrant from the King. It is likewise a necessary qualification, that they should have served as an advocate or principal clerk of session for five years, or as a writer for ten years. When any vacancy happens, the King presents the successor by a letter addressed to the Lords, wherein they are required to try and admit the person named. Their present number is fifteen, and the decisions are carried by a majority.

The College of Justice, as the Court of Session is styled, comprehends not only the Judges but the Advocates who plead before them, the Clerks of Session, and the Writers to the Signet. The privileges which are annexed to the College, extend equally to all the members. They are exempted from paying the minister's stipend, and all customs, &c. imposed upon goods carried to or from the City of Edinburgh.

Their own proper civil jurisdiction in the first instance is very extensive, and in which they judge exclusive of all inferior Courts whatever. In the second, they judge only by review; but the causes here
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are many, as there lies from almost every Court, and every case, a right of appeal.

The Gentlemen who are styled Advocates in this country, are almost innumerable ; for every man who has nothing to do, and no better name to give himself, is called advocate. Of those, however, who practise and get business, the number is extremely few ; but amongst these few, are some men whose abilities are not only an honour to the profession, but to the country itself : Men who make the bar a school of eloquence, and not, as I am sorry to say with us, a jargon of barbarous and almost unintelligible words, and who preserve, in their debates, the manners and sentiments of Gentlemen. I know, that though a lawyer, you have lamented, as well as every other man, that species of illiberal invective, that total disregard of decency and almost of truth, that entire want of all the spirit which a genteel education generally bestows, so remarkable in our own Council. A young practitioner at our bar, often imagines, that it is impossible to be impudent enough ; and that impertinence, far from being a sign of ignorance, is a mark of abilities.

ties. Without mentioning the inhumanity of abusing those people who neither are allowed, nor can have it in their power to defend themselves; I own, for my part, I see no more right that a Counsel at the bar has to insult you with affronts, than a Clergyman would have to address you from the pulpit, or an officer on a review day to knock you down: but if, like some other quarrelsome animals in England, it should be found necessary to suffer them to fight in order to keep up their courage, let lawyer attack lawyer, till after having snarled, and bit, and torn each other, till they are weary, they may fall to picking up what they can get, in peace and good fellowship.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

On the Scotch Laws relative to Marriage.

To C. C—r, Esq. the Temple, London.

Edinburgh, May 10, 1775.

SIR,

IN most countries, the ceremonies of Marriage are treated with respect. A Roman Catholic considers them as one of the duties of his religion; and even an Englishman looks upon the solemnization of it as a serious thing; but here, it is a matter of merriment, and no ceremony at all is necessary. A man, indeed, in Scotland, can scarce be said to know whether he is married or not, as his own consent is no part of the business. It is

is sufficient that two or three people determine it without his participation. A woman who has no money nor much virtue, takes it into her head that it would be a very proper thing for her to marry such a a man, and she does it. She brings two people to swear, that he called her wife, and that they passed the night together as such. There is not the least occasion that there should be one word of truth in all this, or that people who are unconcerned should believe it; but notwithstanding that, a Marriage is confirmed according to Law, wisely made for that purpose. In vain the poor man would say that he did not know the woman; that if he had, he should never have thought of marrying her, or even bring creditable witnesses to the truth of what he says; nobody doubts it, but he is married for all that, and every body laughs at him. It is possible, indeed, that in such a case, a woman would make the most of what she could get, and take a sum of money from one, that she may have an opportunity of imposing upon another: for though, unfortunately, she can but marry one husband at a time, she may attempt to marry a thousand. No
traffic

traffic can be more profitable, while it has the sanction of the Laws, than this is. It is enriching a very amiable part of the sex in a very laudable manner, and opening an extensive field, in which women of genius may shew their abilities.

A Clergyman of a large parish in England, when his parishioners are matrimonially inclined, is the only person who may be said to enjoy the benefits of Matrimony : but were he in this country, though he might be very willing, nobody would give him an opportunity of exercising his function, or receiving the profits of it. Here is no occasion for any particular ceremony ; two people have only to agree to call themselves Man and Wife, and they are so. By the Roman Law the consent of the father was necessary to the marriage of the child ; but it was found to be very absurd that a child could not act as he thought proper ; and so it is ordained by the Laws of Scotland, that the children may marry as soon as they please, and the parents, if they do not approve of it, may rail by themselves.

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The Judges, however, who sometimes have these points under their consideration, seem ashamed of the extravagance and absurdity of their own laws; and when there is any equitable possibility, always determine against them. Indeed, to say the truth, such laws as these are a scandal to society, and teeming with all the evil consequences bad institutions generally produce. Every one knows that clandestine marriages were put a stop to in England from the many impositions that were practised; and that even the multiplication of society was by no means adequate to the misfortunes it sustained from them. But in those cases a ceremony was performed by a regular Clergyman in priest's orders, with the consent of both parties. There was a formal and legal act solemnized in the presence of witnesses, before whom they mutually agreed, and did actually become man and wife. In Scotland, however, the case is entirely different: the law says in one instance, "that a marriage is fully perfect by Consent, which, without any consummation, founds all the conjugal rights and duties."—In another instance, "that a consummation after a promise of marriage forms an actual marriage."

“riage.”—And in a third instance, “that
“it is not necessary that the marriage
“should be celebrated by a Clergyman,
“but that the consent of the parties may
“be declared before any witnesses whate-
“ver.” You here observe that the cha-
racter of the witness is not the least ne-
cessary; and therefore there is no occasi-
on to be difficult in the choice of one, as
any will be sufficient. But this is not
all.—These beneficent and gallant Legisla-
tors, who take such care of young wo-
men, and provide what is proper for
them, further say, “that even should no
“formal consent appear, Marriage is pre-
“sumed from cohabitation.” In England
a poor fellow runs his neck into the noose
wilfully, and with his eyes open: but in
Scotland, here are so many snares and
toils, and gins and pitfalls, that a man
must be endued with uncommon dexteri-
ty, not to be entrapped by some of them.

In reading some cases of this kind this
morning, the uncommon hardship of one
particularly struck me.—A woman proved
with child by a man, who, on a visit to
her at her lying-in, and probably in ten-
derness to her at such a moment, called
her his Wife in the presence of the Mid-
wife.

wife—And on no better foundation, without any antecedent circumstance proved, without having cohabited together, without either habite or repute, were these two people, by a solemn decision of the laws of Scotland, adjudged to be Man and Wife. And now what think you of these Laws? You will imagine, I suppose, from hence, that here is nobody of a certain age unmarried. But, as I have already told you, though many attempts are made to infer such kind of nuptials, they are constantly almost discouraged by the Judges. And indeed were it not for that *vis inertiae* which may be said to reside in Them, I know not what could resist the destructive force of these regulations. You will agree with me in thinking them still more fatal, when you recollect that this place is the seat of an university to which some hundreds of young men annually resort; many of them of the most respectable families; all of them at a time of life when they are but too susceptible of the tender impressions, and but too easily imposed upon by any woman who has art enough to make herself appear an object of affection: many of them ignorant of the laws in this respect, and liable, from the un-
guarded

guarded inexperience of youth, to be drawn into expressions which can never be recalled. When the Scotch weigh these circumstances, when they consider the reputation of their University, and how much it is their duty to guard against these impositions, it becomes matter of less wonder that such marriages never take effect; for there are very few instances of their being confirmed. The first thing the Scotch in general do to strangers, is to put them on their guard against these practices.

Notwithstanding this spirit of Matrimony, there never was a place where so many women of loose character were to be met with at every corner. It may indeed seem the necessary progress, that the woman who voluntarily has recourse to law for an husband should, in some moment, have admitted certain persons to the privilege of one, without any law at all. It is highly requisite, therefore, that the line betwixt a single and a married state should be strongly marked; for when no ceremony is necessary in the change from one state to the other, a woman is too apt to make no ceremony of the matter.

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In spite of the facility of their marriages, the Scotch seem inclined to a single life, and many months pass away without a marriage taking place. While the English are constantly flying down hither to get married, the people here look on with great indifference, and wonder how they can travel four hundred miles for so foolish a purpose. The employment of a Clergyman, I am told, on the borders, is very lucrative; for, as the English are generally in a great hurry to be married, as well as for every other thing, he proportions his demands to their impatience. Were our countrymen and their brides who make these expeditions, a little more acquainted with the laws of this Country, they might set at defiance "the benefit of the Clergy," "as the laws which Love has made" are sufficiently binding.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

Some Peculiarities in the Scotch Laws.

To C. C—r, Esq. the Temple, London.

Edinburgh, May 12, 1775.

SIR,

THERE are some particularities in the Laws of Scotland, which are not only a contradiction to the principles of all Laws whatever, but a disgrace even to common sense. It is generally an allowed maxim, ‘that no question can be put to a man, which has an immediate tendency to condemn himself;’ and yet, in contradiction to this very maxim which they have adopted, there is in some points a reference had to the party’s own oath to condemn or acquit himself. This is styled the “Oath of Probation,” and is used in those cases when the other party has no proof sufficient to establish what he wishes. By
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all laws, and in all cases whatever, every man should be presumed innocent till he is proved to be guilty. In matters of right there is no such thing as a demi-proof; it is either entirely established or not established at all, unless one can suppose there is such a thing as demi-truth. But notwithstanding this, when a certain degree of probability is inferred, the Judge orders the party to swear whether or no what his adversary alleges to be true; and by that means either to condemn himself, or gain his point, by his own oath, in direct contradiction to another law of their own, which says, 'that no man can establish a right by his own oath.'

If you add to this, the little credit that will be given to any man who is acquitted by such means, the temptation it offers for perjury, and the very easy opportunity it gives to every man who really may be guilty, of clearing himself with an appearance of honour, you will, I am sure, agree with me in thinking that nothing could be more absurd. An appeal to oath, like the antient appeals to single combat, confounds the innocent with

with the criminal, and gives an equal power to them both.

Another peculiarity in the Scotch Laws, which you will think equally improper, is the Judicial Examination. The party who bring the action being able to prove nothing, beg leave of the Court to examine the defendant in the way they think best, by asking him what questions they choose, and which tend to make the interrogated either contradict himself, or utter what they wish him to say. This mode of examination is that which the Inquisition adopts, as best suited to its purposes, where they find the poor sufferer guilty in spite of all he can say to the contrary. In England, whenever an accused person is permitted to speak, it is held to be in his own defence. On the contrary, by these laws he is obliged to speak, and what he does say is only calculated to condemn himself. In these cases the Judges make use of a kind of judicial arithmetic, and multiply and subtract at their pleasure; for what the defendant says in his own favour, they very naturally conclude is partiality to himself, and overlook it accordingly: but should he say any thing against himself,
G 3 they

they as naturally imagine that he would say as little as he possibly could, that he might probably conceal half the truth, and therefore they set it right by believing just double of what is the fact.

A third mode of proceeding, equally as unjust as the other two, is when a party wishes to remove any witnesses he thinks may be against him in a cause, and who might be a means of his losing it. In such a situation he begs leave to object Partial Counsel; by which is understood, their having mentioned the subject to any different third person, who, probably, has no knowledge of the cause. The character or reputation of the person is nothing to the purpose: he is found guilty of speaking, and is condemned accordingly. In the proper management of these circumstances lies the whole strength of the cause: and a man frequently gains his point, not by the facts he establishes, and the witnesses he brings, but by the witnesses he removes, and the truth which he conceals. A poor man who fancies he is sure of victory by the testimonies which he has to-day, may find, to-morrow, that he may as well have had none, as they are all taken from him.

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But if this artifice should fail, there is still another to succeed it: they beg leave to assure the Judge the witnesses have no character. A woman, for instance, they allege has had knowledge of man improperly, and therefore cannot speak the truth. They attribute to the tasting this forbidden fruit the reverse of what our First Mother experienced; and instead of teaching them "the knowledge of good and evil," they pronounce they do not know one from the other. In vain, Sir, a man of plain understanding would say, that this circumstance has no relation to speaking the truth, or that having pursued their inclinations in one point, can in no measure prevent them from following the dictates of their conscience in another, where they can have no inclination to mislead them. You might as well talk to the "deaf Adder;" for these humane laws, which are so favourable to women in some instances, lay it down as a principle in this point, 'that after the commission of certain freedoms, there is no truth in woman.'

Though such particulars as these are a disgrace to all laws, and the bane of every society, yet we meet with them

in every place, and they are suffered to remain without any alteration. How strange it is, that every political institution should be distinguished by something that is absurd and ridiculous, and that wherever we turn our eyes we should discover only a confused scene of contradictions, uncertainty, hardships, and arbitrary power! What more mortifying picture can we have of human weakness! As if every thing which is the work of man must be marked with imbecility, and those very laws which punish injustice in others, should be disgraced by injustice of our own.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XL.

A View from Rosline Castle.

To R. D. Esq.

Edinburgh, May 25, 1775.

S I R,

WERE any man of my acquaintance desirous of seeing the sublime and beautiful in perfection, according to Mr. Burke's definition of them, I would bring him into Scotland. For the beautiful, for the softer, and more finished charms, I would shew him the Ladies, who are, in my humble opinion, the most beautiful objects in the creation. For the sublime, I would deliver him to all the naked wildness and extended desolation of the country.

The style of an English landscape is that of improved and cultivated nature. Though frequently highly romantic, it is in general too diminutive, and its prospect too confined. The eye with great ease comprehends the whole of it at one view : but in this country, there is a certain character of greatness and majesty observable in every part. Nature seems to act at large ; all her works are bold, strong, and unfettered by the improvements of art.

Added to this, the appearance of the heavens is not less uncommon than the face of the country, or less diversified. The winds, which here reign with peculiar violence, allow none of that placid and serene sky which gives an air of tranquillity and cheerfulness to every scene. The clouds, driven on by the impetuosity of the storms, assume a thousand fantastic shapes, and changing as suddenly, put on others equally as strange. Nor am I surprised at the wild imagination of Ossian, “bodying them forth” into beings of his own creation ; into the souls of departed heroes, or wicked spirits big with death and desolation.

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Not many day ago, I beheld one of the most picturesque scenes the imagination can possibly paint. It was Rosline Castle, near Edinburgh. The day was uncommonly fine for this season of the year, and gave me every advantage I could desire.

On my left hand lay the Castle of Rosline, now in ruins. The arched gateway which led to it, and on which the sun shone very bright, shewed every mark which time and the inclemency of the seasons that had passed over it, had made in its walls. Within the gate stood the mouldering remains of the Castle itself, disposed in broken and shapeless columns, scattered here and there; some rising in the air to a great height, others level with the ground, some covered over with ivy, others left bare and naked, but all of them bearing the venerable marks of its former grandeur and magnificence. The sun, which now darted its rays amidst the broken arches, and then again was overshadowed by the clouds, shewed them to still greater advantage. Above the Castle, on the left side, rose a steep hill, the side of which was beautifully covered with wood up to

to the very top, except where the bare rock now and then made its appearance, or a sheet of water rushed down in precipitate falls to the bottom.

On the hill where I stood, which was without the Castle, lay in a strange kind of disorder, the fragments of what had formerly been the out-buildings of the Castle. At present nothing remained in any discoverable form, but the arch of a window, through which was a beautiful perspective of the country below you. Nothing could be a stronger picture of ruin than this arch. Its stones were mouldering in decay, its figure had already began to be lost, and part of it now fallen. An old tree, which grew by it, had thrust its withered branches through the wall, and waving with the blast, caused an hollow and mournful sound, which, had it been in the dead of night, in silence, and darkness, might have intimidated the most courageous.

Below the place where I stood, lay a small plain surrounded with hills, which gradually rose above it. A little, but neat farm house added beauty to this spot. It was disjoined from the land on which

which the Castle was situated, by a rivulet of water. The whole scene was a picture of quiet and retirement. It was sheltered on every side ; no storms could incommode it ; and should its inhabitant have ever have known a desire to wander, he had only to look upwards to the Castle of Rosline, to see the nothingness of all human grandeur ; the pride and strength of ages mouldering into dust.

The hills, which immediately surrounded this plain, were covered with the finest verdure : the sheep that were feeding on them, and the sun shining over their surface, gave them the most lively and picturesque air imaginable. Beyond these rose another chain of hills, entirely buried in snow, and which, though probably at many miles distance, appeared in the prospect close upon them. Paint to yourself the extreme beauty of this contrast. The one in all the luxuriance of vegetation, of the most lively green, the next cloathed in all the horrors of winter ! It was the union of two seasons, as opposite in reality, as they now seemed joined in appearance. Above these last hills, as if to close the scene, appeared

appeared the Highlands, in all the awful majesty of superior height and grandeur.

I am afraid that I describe these beauties to you but very imperfectly ; for no words can be adequate to the grandeur of such a subject. As I had nothing to note them with at the time, the strength and vivacity of the first impression is somewhat worn away. But I was rather willing to hazard your censures in this instance, than neglect giving you some faint notion of the scenes of this Country.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XLI.

On the Dancing Masters Balls and Publics.

To Miss Lucinda B——

Edinburgh, May 25, 1775.

MY last letter, I am afraid, afforded my dear Lucinda little worth her acceptance. The defect of matter of greater importance in this Country, which is all Quiet and Serenity, and, like the upper regions, has no share in the storms of that below, must plead my excuse for this epistle; unless you will agree with me, in the words of Sir William Temple on the like occasion,

caſion, “ that as men have more curioſity to enquire how a great man ſleeps, than what a mean man *does* all the day long ;” ſo the very reſt and idleneſs of this northern people, ſeems more worth knowing than the buſy motions of many ſmall ones on the other ſide of the Atlantic, who yet at this time pretend to be conſidered, and make a noiſe.

I think I have told you every thing relating to the public aſſemblies: but there are others which ſeem to afford the Scotch great entertainment, as they are much frequented, and in general more crowded than the others. Theſe are Dancing-maſters Balls, who ſwarm in Edinburgh, and who are conſtantly exhibiting their ſcholars to the public. You know 'tis a cuſtom in London for ſome of the principal Dancing-maſters to have balls for their benefit; but here it is a general thing, from the one moſt in vogue, to the humble teacher of a reel to the drone of the bagpipe. Each has his ball and his public, or his two balls (for I can find no difference) at a particular ſeaſon of the year, in the Aſſembly-room; where a degree of emulation fires their breaſt, and each endeavours to ſhew his
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own excellence and skill as a master, by the execution and performance of his scholars. It is incredible the pleasure and satisfaction the inhabitants of this City take in this diversion. They seem to enjoy it much more than dancing themselves: I suppose from the pleasing remembrance of those happy times when they themselves made part of the entertainment. But on other accounts I cannot wonder at it: as it is not only an entertaining sight, but fills the mind with agreeable reflections, and benevolence, to behold the rising generation in any part of their education that may hereafter contribute either to their own pleasure, or to the advantage of society or mankind. I could not but admire the young ambition just glimmering forth in a Minuet or Country-dance, which, when roused into a flame, might hereafter aspire to a peerage and a coronet: and that self-same grace and elegance dawning in a Bow, which might be destined to persuade a multitude, or command a senate. But besides the satisfaction arising to a thoughtful mind, from the consideration of so many of the human species being rendered completely happy, in
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the full meridian of innocent youth, without any pain, any anxious care, any world in the opposite scale to counterbalance the last portion of their enjoyment: I assure you, 'tis no despicable amusement, even as a puppet-show, to behold so many beautiful little figures displaying their agility and graceful attitudes, as it were in a moving concert.

The children on these occasions are dressed with much elegance, ease, and propriety; without the foppery of the French, or negligence of the English. You neither see a Boy of ten years old in the habillement of a *petit maître*, with bag, solitaire, sword, and muff: or the Youth of seventeen with his hair dishevelled, in the dress of an infant. The Scotch gain great credit by the apparel of their children, especially the young ones, who indeed are fine subjects for the display of taste in this particular.

I do not suppose any nation in Europe is more beautiful than the Scotch for a certain time; but the shape and symmetry of the boys, the complexion and features of the female sex, continue but a short

short period; as men, they are too coarse and ill-fashioned to be handsome; as women, too masculine and robust to be beauties. They dress their children in fancy-dresses, rather than any regular one; particularly the heads of the girls, which they ornament in the most unaffected pleasing manner possible, with ribbands and flowers: the habit of the boys also is elegant and plain: the performers, therefore, as to outside appearance, have every thing to recommend and set off their excellence in dancing.

But I cannot say, they are any great proficient in any style of dancing that requires grace: the Scotch are perfect strangers to it in any part of their life. Agility and strength are most natural to them, are their darling delight, which they endeavour to improve from their earliest infancy, and in which they arrive at much perfection. But as many people take the greatest pains to accomplish what they will never obtain; so the inhabitants of this country exhaust much time in learning a minuet, the most requisite part of which they never arrive at, namely, that elegant and graceful air
which

which is the very essence of it, and of which the Italians and French are the only complete masters.

But if the Scotch are deprived of this advantage to their persons, all-provident Nature has bestowed on them others, which are of much greater use to themselves and society. The want of grace is abundantly recompensed by a superiority of strength and manliness, and that sinewy arm, the very sight of which is sufficient to make a pampered offspring of the south stand amazed and tremble.

At these balls all the children dance minuets ; which would be very tiresome and disagreeable, as well from the badness of the performance, as from the length of time they would take up, were they regularly continued. But the Dancing-masters enliven the entertainment by introducing between the minuets their High Dances, (which is a kind of Double Hornpipe) in the execution of which they excel perhaps the rest of the World. I wish I had it in my power to describe to you the variety of figures and steps they put into it. Besides all these common

mon to the hornpipe, they have a number of their own, which I never before saw or heard of ; and their neatness and quickness in the performance of them is incredible : so amazing is their agility, that an Irishman, who was standing by me the other night, could not help exclaiming in his surprise ‘ that by Jesus, he never saw children so *handy* with their *feet* in all his life.’

The motion of the feet is indeed the only thing that is to be considered in these dances, as they rather neglect than pay any attention to the other parts of the body ; which is a great pity, since it would render the dance much more complete and agreeable, were the attitude of the hands and positions of the body more studied and understood by them. From the practice of these high dances one great advantage is derived to the young men, in giving prodigious powers to their ancles and legs : but I cannot say it is an ornamental advantage either to them or to the ladies ; as it makes them too large in those parts for the proportion of the rest of the body, and takes off that fine tapering

pering form which is so essential to real beauty.

I do not know any place in the world where dancing is made so necessary a part of polite education as in Edinburgh. For the number of inhabitants I suppose there are more Dancing-masters than in any other City; who gain large fortunes, though they instruct on very moderate terms, from the number of scholars who constantly attend them. In general they may be said to be very good ones, as well those of their own Country as Foreigners from most of the polite parts of Europe. Besides minuets and those high dances, they instruct the children in cotillions and allemandes, but not many of them, as they are sensible of their incapability of succeeding. In dancing, as in many other things, instruction and precept alone do not convey ideas so well as example and practice. Had they some few as excellent as Miss Lucinda B— to shew them what it was to move gracefully, elegantly, and unaffectedly, I do not doubt but that then they might make some progress, and reach some degree of perfection. I wish, therefore, for the benefit of
this

this City, that you, and half a dozen of your female acquaintance, would pass the next winter in Edinburgh, in order to give them a model of a complete dancer.

Believe me, Dear Lucinda,

sincerely Yours.

LETTER

LETTER XLII.

On the Assemblies public and private.

To Miss Lucinda B——

Edinburgh, May 19, 1773.

DEAR LUCINDA,

YOUR description of the Festino afforded me no little amusement; and I think myself as fortunate in hearing your account of it, as you can do in being present at the reality. But there is one thing at which I cannot but be angry; that you should entertain such a contemptible idea of our amusements: I say our, for I have been in this country so long, that I begin to think myself an inhabitant of it. Suffer me to inform
you,

you that we too have Assemblies, brilliant as the eyes of Beauties can make them, with which this country abounds, and which every place of public resort in Edinburgh can boast of, if they had no other inducements or charms to recommend them.

I assure you the Assemblies afford a very agreeable diversion: they are governed by seven Directors and seven Directresses, one of whom manages the dancing alternately, and performs the part of Mistress of the Ceremonies. As the room is too small for the company who generally frequent them, it is impossible for all to dance at the same time: to prevent, therefore, the inconvenience and confusion which must necessarily be occasioned, the Lady Directress is obliged to divide the company into Sets, and, suit them according to their rank and quality, putting about twelve couple in a Set. After this *etiquette* is over, the first Set dance minuets, beginning in the order of the tickets which are distributed by the Lady Directress, and then one country dance, in the middle of the room, which is surrounded by chairs, to prevent the rest of the company from interfering

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fering with the dancers. At the conclusion of this, the second Set begin, and then the third and fourth in their respective turns, till all the Sets have danced their minuet and country dance, and then the first begin a country dance, and the other follow as at first.

This mode of conducting the Assemblies is much approved of by the inhabitants of this City, and certainly has many conveniencies; as you dance with the greatest ease, order, and regularity, from having the whole room, and no crowd or interruption; besides, you generally know your company, which gives the public all the advantages of a private entertainment. But then the young Ladies, who are fond of dancing, complain, that by this means they are deprived of that pleasure, as it seldom happens that a Set can dance oftener than twice. Indeed the worst circumstance attending it is, that you are often prevented entirely from dancing, as there may be too many Sets for it ever to come to your turn; but for my own part, I think that the comfort with which you dance balances every disadvantage, and makes it,

it, upon the whole, a most eligible form for an Assembly.

Were the Scotch Gentlemen disposed to gallantry, this manner of managing the Dancing, would afford them the finest opportunity they could wish, as they are left the whole evening to furnish entertainment and conversation for their partners. But observations on the cloaths and dancing of the party who are performing, too often fill up the vacant interval; and, instead of ogling, sighs, protestations, and endearments, the Lady sits] envying the more fortunate stars of her companion who is dancing, whilst her partner yawns for the approaching period of his own exhibition.

Ever since I have been in Edinburgh, the office of Lady Directress has been discharged by Mrs. Murray, sister to Lord Mansfield; who executes her part with so much success, that the other Ladies fear to attempt it after her; and, indeed, she deserves every encomium that can be bestowed on her. As long as Mrs. Murray obliges the Public with her assistance, the City of Edinburgh cannot wish for a more agreeable

entertainment, than their Assemblies ; but if any thing should happen to deprive them of her abilities, it is imagined they would furnish themselves with a better room, where a different plan would be adopted.

How far it is better for a public amusement to be under the influence of a Lady, or how far the Scotch Gentlemen are to be justified in giving so much trouble and fatigue to the fair sex, I will not pretend to say ; but thus far I can speak from experience, that nothing was ever conducted with more propriety and regularity, than they are at present ; nor was I ever at any Assembly where the authority of the Manager was so observed or respected. With the utmost politeness, affability, and good humour, Mrs. Murray attends to every one. All petitions are heard, and demands granted which appear reasonable.

The company is so much the more obliged to Mrs. Murray, as the task is by no means to be envied. The crowd which immediately surrounds her on her entering the room, the impetuous applications of *chaperons*, maiden-aunts, and the

the earnest intreaties of lovers to obtain a ticket in one of the first Sets for the dear object, render the fatigue of the office of Lady Directress almost intolerable; and I am sensible, few would undertake it, did not Mrs. Murray's zeal and endeavours meet with universal approbation.

Besides minuets and country-dances, they in general dance reels in separate parts of the room; which is a dance that every one is acquainted with, but none but a native of Scotland can execute in perfection. Their great agility, vivacity, and variety of hornpipe steps, render it to them a most entertaining dance; but to a stranger, the sameness of the figure makes it trifling and insipid, though you are employed during the whole time of its operation; which, indeed, is the reason why it is so peculiarly adapted to the Scotch, who are little acquainted with the attitude of standing still.

Allemandes and Cotillons are neither admired nor known in public companies in this City. Those Ladies who have seen them danced in Paris or London,

are unwilling to introduce them, well-knowing how little calculated they are for the meridian of their country.

I was lately at an Assembly here on the Queen's birth-day, where Mrs. Murray representing her Majesty, presided in the chair, and received the proper compliments. It was conducted with the usual elegance and propriety, and was so crowded, that not half the Sets could dance that wished to do it. I assure you I never saw a stronger appearance of loyalty even at St. James's, or more rejoicing on any public event.

But besides the general Assemblies, there are a number of private ones given by societies, clubs, or subscription, and every week is productive of something new. Among the rest, the matrons and married Ladies give an Assembly and Entertainment to the young Ladies, to whom they distribute tickets to provide themselves partners. You may be sure the old ones are not backward in their invitation. Each of them is squired by some antiquated beau, who, with his best cloaths, brushes up his best minuet, and revives

revives in imagination the feats of ancient times.

In return for this Ball the Gentlemen of the Capilaire club give another equally elegant and polite, with a supper, ices, and every thing that luxury can invent. After the Ladies are withdrawn, the Gentlemen, in conformity with the manner of this Country, retire into a private room, where each sacrifices his understanding and health to wishing, in full bumpers, the health of his fair partner; who, if she has any understanding, must ridicule, condemn, and abhor the custom. But the Scotch Gentlemen are so resolute in their determination, that many of them, immediately after the departure of the Ladies, retire for a short time, in order to change their dancing apparel, and put on a dress more adapted to the occasion of riot and excess.

Happy would it be for our sex, had every female that good sense, which you are possessed of! Was the conversation of all of them as agreeable, mankind would be so far from finding happiness in dissipation and wine, that a drunkard and a coward would be equally ignominious.

The society of the women would afford them the only real pleasure ; and, instead of remorse, instead of

“ Thick-ey’d, musing, cursed melancholy,”

which pursue the votary of Bacchus, the debauchee, and the gamester, a constant serenity of mind from the improvement of their knowledge, a chearful confidence from the conviction of reason and sound judgment ; a uniform life and spirit in their conversation, would render them tender parents, affectionate friends, and faithful lovers.

My dear Lucinda,

believe me sincerely yours.

LETTER

LETTER XLIII.

On the Police of Edinburgh.

To R. D. Esq ;

Edinburgh, May 25, 1775.

S I R,

AN Englishman, who has passed much of his life in London, and who has been entertained every morning with some dreadful account of Robbery or Outrage committed the evening before, would be much surpris'd, on coming into this City, to find that he might go with the same security at midnight as at noonday. A man, in the course of his whole life, shall not have the fortune here to meet with an house-breaker, or

even so much as a single foot-pad: and a woman shall walk along the streets at any hour in an evening, without being "broke in upon," as Tristram Shandy says, "by one tender salutation." At eleven o'clock, all is quiet and silent; not so much as a watchman to disturb the general repose. Now and then at a late, or rather an early hour in the morning, you hear a little party at the taverns amusing themselves by breaking the bottles and glasses; but this is all in good humour, and what the constable has no business with.

As I do not imagine this is owing to the peculiar dispositions of the Scotch; for human nature, when occasion presents itself, is, I take it, the same in all places, we must attribute it to the excellence of the Police. The City Guard, who, I assure you, are very terrible looking men, and perform their exercise every day in the High-street, to shew people what they can do, have their stations, during the whole night, in the street, to prevent any quarrels or disorders that may arise there. These are relieved by others in their turn; so that the

the duty is performed by all them in succession.

This Guard is of very old standing, and commanded at present by no less a person than the Provost of Edinburgh, who is generally a tradesman, and consequently much used to arms. But I can with great truth inform you, that the command has been vested in persons equally formidable for two centuries or more. In the year 1580, the Common Council of Edinburgh formed citizens into companies of fifty men each, and appointed burgeses of the best experience in martial affairs to command them: for, as the Act wisely says, “ It hath been
“ found by experience, in many coun-
“ tries, that it is not so much the mul-
“ titude that overcometh, as the expe-
“ rience and skill of well-trained and ex-
“ ercised soldiers, seeing it is the know-
“ ledge of warfare that emboldeneth to
“ fight.” So the experienced burgeses led on this bold band of citizens as often as their skill was called for. At present, however, their great knowledge in warfare has not many opportunities of shewing itself; and as they are chiefly used as a guard during the night time,
their

their heroic deeds are unfortunately concealed from public view. To do them justice, however, they seldom sleep upon their post, which is saying a great deal for men who are not kept awake by the fear of an enemy. But whether the extreme good order and regularity which is observed in the streets, and the very few robberies which are committed, are entirely owing to these military men or not, is rather difficult to determine. I believe there are other people of a more civil nature, who share with them the hardships as well as the honour of accomplishing so great a task. These are a set of men who are called in this country Cadies, and who have been formed many years into a society for their own emolument and the public good; a society which is probably as useful and extraordinary as ever existed. To tell you what these people do is impossible; for there is nothing almost which they do not do. They are the only persons who may truly be said to have attained universal knowledge; for they know every thing and every body; they even know sometimes what you do better than you yourself. The moment a stranger comes into Edinburgh, they know it: how long he
is

is to stay; whither he is going; where he comes from, and what he is. In regard to the Police, this may be a convenience, otherwise it would be a great nuisance. A certain number of them stand all day long, and most of the night, at the top of the High-street, waiting for employment. Whoever has occasion for them, has only to pronounce the word "Cadie," and they fly from all parts to attend the summons. Whatever person you may want, they know immediately where he is to be found. Trust them with what sum of money you please, you are quite safe: they are obliged by the rules of their Order to make good every thing they lose. A gentleman once sent one of these Mercuries with a letter inclosing bills for some hundred pounds; the man lost it, and the Society (who are responsible for these losses) restored the sum to the proprietor.

These men act likewise in the capacity of Sir John Fielding's Thief-takers in London, and take all the thieves here, as they have intelligence of the places where such persons is likely to be found. In short, nothing can escape them:

them: and what Doctor Johnson says of a Frenchman may be truly applied to them;

“ Each gainful trade a starving Cadie knows,
“ And bid him go to Hell—to Hell he goes.”

These are the people who are the great means of preserving the public peace, and of preventing all those crimes which are generally perpetrated under a Police which is ill-observed. It is the certainty of punishment which prevents guilt: for when a man is sure of being discovered, he dreads the commission of the smallest offences. It is well known that the frequency of assassination in many parts of Italy, is entirely owing to the sanctuaries which protect the offenders. A man has only to calculate the distance he has to run, and the probability he has of being caught, and he perpetrates a murder with impunity.

Nothing can reflect more honour on this City, than the safety in which every man finds himself and his property. An Englishman, who has his house broken
ken

ken open twenty times in his life, calls it his Castle; and though he is afraid of stirring out of his doors after it is dark, he is continually boasting to you of his liberty, and the security of his person.

The Police of Paris has long been a subject of general and deserved admiration. A man may pass through the streets there at any hour in an evening, with as little danger as he would in the middle of the day.

It is by the same means as in Paris that the Police in Edinburgh is so well observed, which otherwise, from its populousness, and the style of the buildings, is as much calculated to conceal villains, as any city whatever. No people in the World undergo greater hardships, or live in a worse degree of wretchedness and poverty, than the lower classes here; but though they are very poor, I believe as a nation, they are very honest; at least, their dishonesty takes a different turn from that of the common people in England: it runs into that concealed line
of

of acting which, under the mask of insinuation and hypocrisy, works its way gradually to the purpose it wishes to attain, and not into that open and avowed villainy which seeks a miserable and precarious subsistence at the hazard of life, and which, even in danger and death, discovers a fortitude that ought to be the result of virtue alone.

In defiance of the rigour of the penal laws in England ; in spite of the immense numbers who die by the executioner, I do not find that the laws are in the least better observed, or fewer people robbed. From this consideration I am convinced that frequent executions are not of that utility many people think them of. " It has been observed," " says Voltaire, " that a man after he " is hanged is good for nothing ; and " that punishments invented for the good " of society, ought to be useful to so- " ciety : it is likewise evident, that a " score of stout robbers condemned for " life to some public work would serve " the state in their punishments, but " that hanging them is a benefit to no- " body but the Executioner."

If

If the mildness of penal laws were an inducement to commit crimes, the Scotch would encourage more villains and robbers than any Nation under the Sun, for they spare as many as they possibly can: but the contrary is very evident; and in all the robberies that ever happened, no act of wanton cruelty, or unnecessary offence has been known. The gaols here are likewise a convincing proof that the malefactors are neither so ingenious nor so hardened in villainy as with us.

In short, look where you will, you find that, under that numerous species of laws which form the police of every country, the mildest and most lenient are productive of the fewest crimes possible; and that good intelligence, with proper inspection, and not rigorous punishment, are the only true means of preserving public peace. Every man who passes any time in this Country will be convinced that too much cannot be said of the excellence of the Scotch laws in this respect, and the Magistrates who dispense them. The conviction that your person and property are really secure, is the truest argument of liberty in every

very nation; unless we agree with an old Commentator, that liberty is "*jus faciendi quicquid velis*;" and that every body has a right to do what they think proper:—a definition which most people seem inclined to give it: and which, as long as it continues in theory, may be very well—but Heaven defend us from the practice!

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XLIV.

*On the State of the Agriculture near
Edinburgh.*

To R. D. Esq.

SIR,

IN compliance with a former promise I will endeavour to give you some short account of the country adjacent to Edinburgh, and the state of their Agriculture, though I cannot say it deserves your attention. The three immense hills adjoining to the City, and which are named "Arthur's Seat," "Salisbury Craig," and "Charlton Hill," are so broken, and in many parts so precipitately steep, that it is impossible to use them in tillage, and they

they are therefore always kept in grass, and fed upon by sheep, cows, &c. On the summit of these hills the inhabitants of Edinburgh play at their favourite game of *Golf*; and the possessors of the ground turn it to better account by letting part of it for that purpose, than by grazing the whole of it. Around the edges of Charlton Hill they are now cutting out a walk, which, from the amazing height of the hill, and the variety of the prospects, will, when it is entirely finished, be one of the most extraordinary ones in Europe.

The Plough made use of in the Lowlands is that without wheels, which they draw with one or two horses, as the soil is very light and shallow. The ground all around the Town is pasture, and rented by the inhabitants of the City for their cattle; and they pay for it, upon an average, the sum of three pounds *per* Acre. Of Corn land the quantity is very inconsiderable, and the crops are in general very bad. In some measure this may be attributed to the poorness of the land; but the Scotch are by no means good farmers. Agriculture is one of those things of which they seem

seem to have but a very indifferent idea, and which the learned here have never thought of studying. Their fortunes in general consist either of ready money or of houses in Edinburgh; for those who possess landed property have it in the Highlands, which are almost incapable of cultivation. There are in this Country very few of that middle class of Gentry, as with us, who reside upon their own estates, and who, unambitious of mixing with the World, are contented with taking care of their own lands, and living by their industry; and who think themselves no inconsiderable members of society, while confined to the narrow limits of their own *demesnes*; and while they are improving their hereditary income, add to the beauty of their country, and to Agriculture in general.

I believe many of the Scotch think this study below their regard. How shocking would such sentiments be held in England! where of late years Agriculture has been matter of universal consideration, and men of the first abilities and most elevated rank have been ambitious of shining in the characters of Farmers;

mers ; and shunning all the more brilliant scenes of public life, where real genius ought to be exerted, have retired without honour, and been satisfied with obscurity.

Nay, so far has this fashion been carried, that a † Gentleman shall travel into a remote country, the language of which he does not understand, and looking out of his chaise window as he passes along, shall think it necessary, on his return, to publish a long and tedious account of the Husbandry of every country he has seen.

Some years ago every man who travelled went in the character of a Builder, taking the measure of this dome, and that temple, and then relating to his countrymen the height, circumference, &c. of each : now every person acts the part of a Farmer ; he enquires after the crops, turns over the soil, and tastes the manure, for the benefit of his countrymen, who are to be entertained with his discoveries.

† Vide Mr. Marshal's Tour through Sweden, Ruffia, &c. and which is filled with these Remarks.

Poor

Poor Yorick laughed the first of these fooleries out of countenance; we now find the want of his talents to ridicule the second: but alas! "where are his gibes and his merriment now?"——all passed away and forgotten with himself!

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

On the Scotch Music.

To R. L. T. Esq;

Edinburgh, May 27, 1775.

DEAR SIR,

AMONGST the other polite arts which are encouraged and admired in this Country, Music seems to have as many votaries, and to be esteemed as much, as any other. There are few places where it is made a more requisite part of female education than at Edinburgh: almost every one above the common rank of mankind have some knowledge and taste in it. Though many of the tunes which in England are styled

styled Scotch airs, are the production of modern imitators, and have been forged on the World as the genuine composition of this Country, when they have been the offspring of a London Music-shop: yet there are some of very great antiquity, which afford a specimen of the genius of the inhabitants in former ages in this science, and which to this day are universally approved of, as expressing the natural feelings of the heart, in the most tender, sympathetic, and soothing style. As every one of these pieces that have been handed down to us are of vocal music, it is most probable that the words, which are often highly poetical and beautiful, have been the cause of their longævity; notwithstanding as musical literature, they are greatly meritorious, and perhaps of the most emphatic, plaintive, sentimental harmony, of any compositions that ever existed.

Of the originality of this music, and of its estimation in foreign countries as well as in this, there cannot be a greater proof than an anecdote from Tassoni, the author of the celebrated Mock-heroic Poem of *Sechia rapita*, who, in his *Pensieri diversi*, tells us in what esteem a kind of music which was peculiar to

this nation, was held even in Italy, that seat of the Muses, long before the time of David Rizzio ; and by his description of it, exactly characterizes that species of which even now we have many and delightful examples *.

As the excellency of vocal music consists in the harmony being adapted to the sense and pronunciation of the words, as likewise to the accent and cadence of the language it is set to, which are different in every different country, and vary as much as the genius and disposition of the inhabitants ; so these ancient Scotch tunes are wonderfully beautiful in this respect, and appear with more charms in proportion as you become acquainted with

* It is generally, imagined, that David Rizzio was the Author of this species of Music : but if credit may be given to Tassoni, it is of much greater antiquity ; whose words are,

“ Noi ancora possiamo connumerar tra Nostri Jaco-
 “ bo Re di Scozia, che non pur Cose sacre compose
 “ in Canto, ma trovo da se stesso una nuova Musica
 “ lamentevole & mesta, differente da tutte l'altre.
 “ Nelche poi e stato imitato da Don Carlo Gesval-
 “ do Principe di Venosa, chi in questa nostra Eta
 “ ha illustrata anch' Egli la Musica con nuove mi-
 “ rabile invenzione.”

the

the natives, and their manner of speaking and expressing their thoughts ; as they are formed on sounds which are familiar to you every where in this country, and here alone have their peculiar grace. Were you to hear a Scotch lady repeat the verses of any of the true original songs, and afterwards to sing them to the notes, you would find such an affinity to the tone of her voice in speaking that the notes would appear only the accents of the language made exquisitely sweet and musical. The sentiments also of these songs consisting of that pensive, dying softness, and expressed in such tender and passionate words, which are so conformable to the genius and inclination of the women, whose hearts are susceptible of every impression when assisted with the power of such harmony, make it impossible to conceive any human eloquence more delightful and more persuasive.

The modern Music of this Country (of which there are very few Composers, notwithstanding the great encouragement it meets with, and makes one of the principal diversions of every great town in Scotland) is not of the same
I 2 excellence,

excellence, or breathes that natural spirit and agreeable sweetness which distinguishes that of former times. At present they rather endeavour to imitate other nations, that to have a style peculiar to themselves; and their pieces are made up of such variety of tastes, that they may be said to be harmonic Oglios. Such is the case of my Lord Kelly, whose admirable talents and genius in this science have been corrupted and restrained by his poorly copying the compositions of other masters. Had he pursued that originality of fancy and expression, which is really natural to him, there is no doubt but that Scotland, at this hour, might have boasted her musical excellence, equal to any other nation in Europe. As a proof of this, I refer you to those wilder compositions, where his proper genius has broke forth, where his imagination heated by wine, and his mind unfettered by precept, and unbiassed by example, has indulged itself in all its native freedom. But, in general, too close an observance of the Italian manner has corrupted him, and many other composers of this Country; and, I am afraid, is spreading also its contagion in ours. In a few years, probably, we shall

shall have no more remains of the true English Music, than there is here at present of that charming species which I before mentioned, and which, if beauty could insure immortality, ought never to die.

I would not have you imagine, from what I have said, that I am not an admirer of Italian Music; so far from it, I greatly esteem it, and think it deserves the highest degree of commendation as Italian Music, as Music adapted to the spirit and disposition of Italy; in which sense it certainly excels the music of all other countries, which are less suited to the sentiments and expression of their respective inhabitants. But this is so far from being the reason why other nations should imitate it, that it is the very reason they should not. It is the same with music as with languages: the tone and pronunciation of which express the sentiments of any particular people, much better than the same words delivered by the mouth of a foreigner; as likewise words of quite an opposite signification, are often expressed in different languages in the same tone of voice. Thus, for instance, sentences of interrogation and
I 3 admiration,

admiration, by an Italian, would be spoken in tones not unlike the ordinary tones of the English voice when we are angry. That musical expression varies in the same manner, you will stand in need of no other demonstration than to translate any foreign song into our tongue; so that the same note serves the corresponding word in each, and you will see, provided you have a perfect knowledge of the harmony of both languages, what different ideas will be excited by it, accordingly as it is applied to words; and how improperly, perhaps, it would express the passion in the English.

One of the principal entertainments in Edinburgh is a Concert, which is supported by subscription, and under the direction of a Governor, deputy Governor, Treasurer, and five Directors, who procure some of the best performers from other countries, and have a weekly Concert in an elegant room, which they have built for that purpose, and which is styled St. Cecilia's Hall. It is rather too confined; but in every other respect the best accommodated to Music of any room I ever was in. The figure of it is elliptical, and the roof is vaulted, and a single

a single instrument is heard in it with the greatest possible advantage. The Managers of the Concert have a certain number of tickets to distribute to their friends, so that none are admitted but the people of fashion. Though the band is a good one in general, yet I cannot say much in favour of the vocal performers.

The natives of this country are not remarkable for their abilities in fingering; and except in a few of the real Scotch tunes, I have never met with a voice that had either compass or an agreeable tone. But in order to make up this deficiency in their own countrymen, the managers take care to have some of the best singers from London and Italy. At present they have some tolerably good ones, who are not quite so admired as a Gabrielli or a Tenducci would be: the latter of whom, before he fled from Great Britain, resided here a considerable time, and was one cause of introducing that rage for Italian music, which is now so predominant. Indeed, the degree of attachment which is shewn to Music in general in this country, exceeds belief. It is not only the principal entertainment, but the constant

topic of every conversation; and it is necessary not only to be a lover of it, but to be possessed of a knowledge of the science to make yourself agreeable to society.

In vain may a man of letters, whose want of natural faculties have prevented him from understanding an art, from which he could derive no pleasure, endeavour to introduce other matters of discourse, however entertaining in their nature: every thing must give place to music. Music alone engrosses every idea. In religion a Scotchman is grave and abstracted; in politics serious and deliberate: it is in the power of harmony alone to make him an enthusiast.

What a misfortune it is to the country, and how trifling does it appear to a stranger, to find so many philosophers, professors of science, and respectable characters, disputing on the merits of an Italian fiddle, and the preciseness of a demiquaver; while poetry, painting, architecture, and theatrical amusements, whose province it is to instruct as well as to amuse, here couch beneath the dominion of an air or a ballad,

a ballad, which at best were only invented to pass away a vacant hour, or ease the mind from more important duties!

I have the honour to be,

yours sincerely.

LETTER

LETTER XLVI.

To R. D. Esq.

S I R,

YOU have already received so many letters from this country, that you will imagine I think of making it my residence; and, in truth, I have in some measure begun to consider it as my home. But alas! every thing in this vile world is transitory and uncertain. After all the agreeable hours I have passed here, the remembrance of which will ever be dear to me, I am on the point of taking my leave of this kingdom. Travellers, you know, generally affect a sorrow on parting with those who have received them civilly; and sometimes, probably, may feel one. But I can assure you,

you, that on this occasion it is not necessary “to assume a virtue which I have not.” I am so well convinced of the merit of those I leave behind me, that I feel the most sincere regret for my departure.

The wandering life I have hitherto led, has by no means extinguished these sensations: for, though I despise all attachments to this place or the other, merely for being such, I make it my study to conform, as far as I can, to the opinions, and even to the prejudices of every country into which I go. Every man should do so, because it is the means of making his own happiness.

Whatever you may think of the disagreeableness of hurrying from place to place, unsettled and unconnected, let me tell you, that travelling has its pleasures. Solon, you will remember, was so well convinced of the truth of this maxim, that he began his travels at fifty years of age. The celebrated Madame Boëage says, “notwithstanding the regret of leaving our friends, the time spent in travelling is probably the most pleasing of our lives, and that which passes away
“way

“way most rapidly. By habit, objects
“become insipid to us, as we do to others.
“Let us then change our country and
“we shall become new : for, though man-
“kind are the same every where, their
“passions and their manners, which we
“observe under different forms, continu-
“ally excite our wonder, and furnish
“new matter for our attention.”

But it is not the present moment alone that is thus profitably or pleasingly employed; it is the recollection of these scenes in future life. A man should not forget that there are a number of solitary years in reversion, when the body, weakened by sickness or worn out by pain, forcibly tied down to one place, leaves the mind free and active, and whose reflections must then be his only entertainment. If he has none of these resources in his own mind, his situation is truly pitiable: for the season of the passions is of very short duration.

But adieu to moralizing! The little time I have now left me, must be employed in acknowledging the numerous civilities I have received, and in parting from those I most esteem. I wish this last of-
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Topham, Edward, 1751-1820

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